AN ILLUSTRATED HISTORY OF THE THIRD YEAR OF THE GREAT WAR

1916

KEY PUBLISHING

Brought to you by
A HISTORY OF CONFLICT
BRITAIN AT WAR
MAGAZINE

**The Battle of the Somme: The British Army's Darkest Day,
Sinking of HMS Hampshire and the death of Lord Kitchener,
First Zeppelin Shot Down, Execution of Captain Fryatt,
First German daylight raid on London, T.E. Lawrence**

£5.99
14
9 780946 219551

World War I

1:30 Scale

Presenting a selection of World War One figures perfect for depicting life behind the lines in the third year of one of the biggest conflicts of the 20th century.

1 Piece Set

B23064 1916-17 British Infantry Walking with Rations

1 Piece Set

B23061 1914-18 British Nurse

1 Piece Set

B23071 1916-17 British Infantry Standing Smoking

2 Piece Set

B23085 1916-17 British Infantry Pushing Bicycle No.1

2 Piece Set

B23063 1916-18 British Lancer Feeding Horse

1 Piece Set

B23096 1916-17 British Infantry Marching No.2

2 Piece Set

B23062 1916-18 British Lancer Mounted No.1

To locate your nearest stockist please visit: **http://britain.bachmann.co.uk**

Model, Collect & Create

THE THIRD YEAR OF THE GREAT WAR: 1916

THE YEAR 1916 will always be remembered for the Battle of the Somme. Overshadowing the fighting in the Middle East and East Africa, the Irish Easter uprising and even the greatest naval engagement in history at Jutland, it is the Somme that has come to epitomise everything that was both heroic and hopeless in the world's first global conflict.

No-one had ever imagined the scale of the losses that the war would bring and no-one knew how to stop the killing. With all the pre-war plans having long since been discarded, neither side could find a way to victory. The only hope was that the enemy would be ground into submission – but how long would that take and how many more would die before that moment arrived?

Yet slowly as the year progressed, hope, which had once flamed so brightly but had only sparked fitfully for many months, began at last to burn steadily. No longer were the operations of generals restricted by a shortage of shells, and battle after battle saw the Germans being pushed further back. Even the French had stabilised their positions at Verdun, which had become to be seen as a symbol of their determination never to surrender whatever the cost.

Faced with such opposition and suffering losses to their men and equipment that they simply could not replace, the Germans knew that they could never win the war. The unrelenting pressure exerted by the British Expeditionary Force had resulted in the loss of half a million of some of Germany's finest troops. If Field Marshal Haig continued his offensive in France the German Army would be bled dry. Seeing only eventual defeat, in December 1916 Germany offered a negotiated peace that would bring the fighting to an end. It was at that moment that the Allies knew they would win. The third year of the war proved decisive. It marked the beginning of the end for Germany and the Central Powers.

John Grehan

John Grehan
Editor

Editor: John Grehan
Assistant Editor: Martin Mace
Designer: Dan Jarman

Executive Chairman: Richard Cox
Managing Director/Publisher: Adrian Cox
Commercial Director: Ann Saundry
Production Manager: Janet Watkins
Marketing Manager: Martin Steele

Contacts
Key Publishing Ltd
PO Box 100, Stamford, Lincolnshire, PE9 1XQ
E-mail: enquiries@keypublishing.com
www.keypublishing.com

Distribution: Seymour Distribution Ltd.
Telephone: 020 7429 400
Printed by Warners (Midlands) Plc, Bourne, Lincs.

The entire contents of this special edition is copyright © 2015. No part of it may be reproduced in any form or stored in any form of retrieval system without the prior permission of the publisher.

Published by Key Publishing Ltd
www.britain-at-war-magazine.com

KEY PUBLISHING
A HISTORY OF CONFLICT BRITAIN AT WAR MAGAZINE

MAIN IMAGE:
Troops sheltering in a trench, as a shell explodes in the background, during the Battle of the Somme.
(HISTORIC MILITARY PRESS)

THE EVENTS OF 1916

CONTENTS

JANUARY

1 Churchill Takes Command **10**
8 Gallipoli Peninsula Evacuated **11**
15 SS *Appam* Captured by German Raider **13**
27 Military Service Act Receives Royal Assent **15**

FEBRUARY

2 Zeppelin *L-19* Lost at Sea **17**
9 The Battle on the Lake **19**
23 Ministry of Blockade is Formed **21**

MARCH

24 SS *Sussex* Attacked **22**
25 Military Medal Instituted **24**
27 The Battle of the St Eloi Craters **25**

APRIL

2 The Uplees Disaster **27**
2 Scotland's First Air Raid **28**
11 German Spy Executed in Tower of London **29**
15 Resupplying the Besieged Kut Garrison by Air **30**
21 Sir Roger Casement Arrested After Being Landed in Ireland **32**
24 The Easter Rising **34**
25 Attack on the East Coast: The Lowestoft Raid **36**
27 Gas Attack at Hulluch **38**
27 German *UC-5* Captured **40**
29 The Fall of Kut **42**

MAY

4 Number of British Prisoners of War Announced **44**
11 The Air Board is Formed **46**
16 The Sykes–Picot Agreement is Signed **47**
21 Daylight Saving Time is Introduced **48**
22 Cost of the War **49**
24 The Sopwith 1½ Strutter Two-Seat Fighter Arrives in France **50**
31 The Battle of Jutland **51**

JUNE

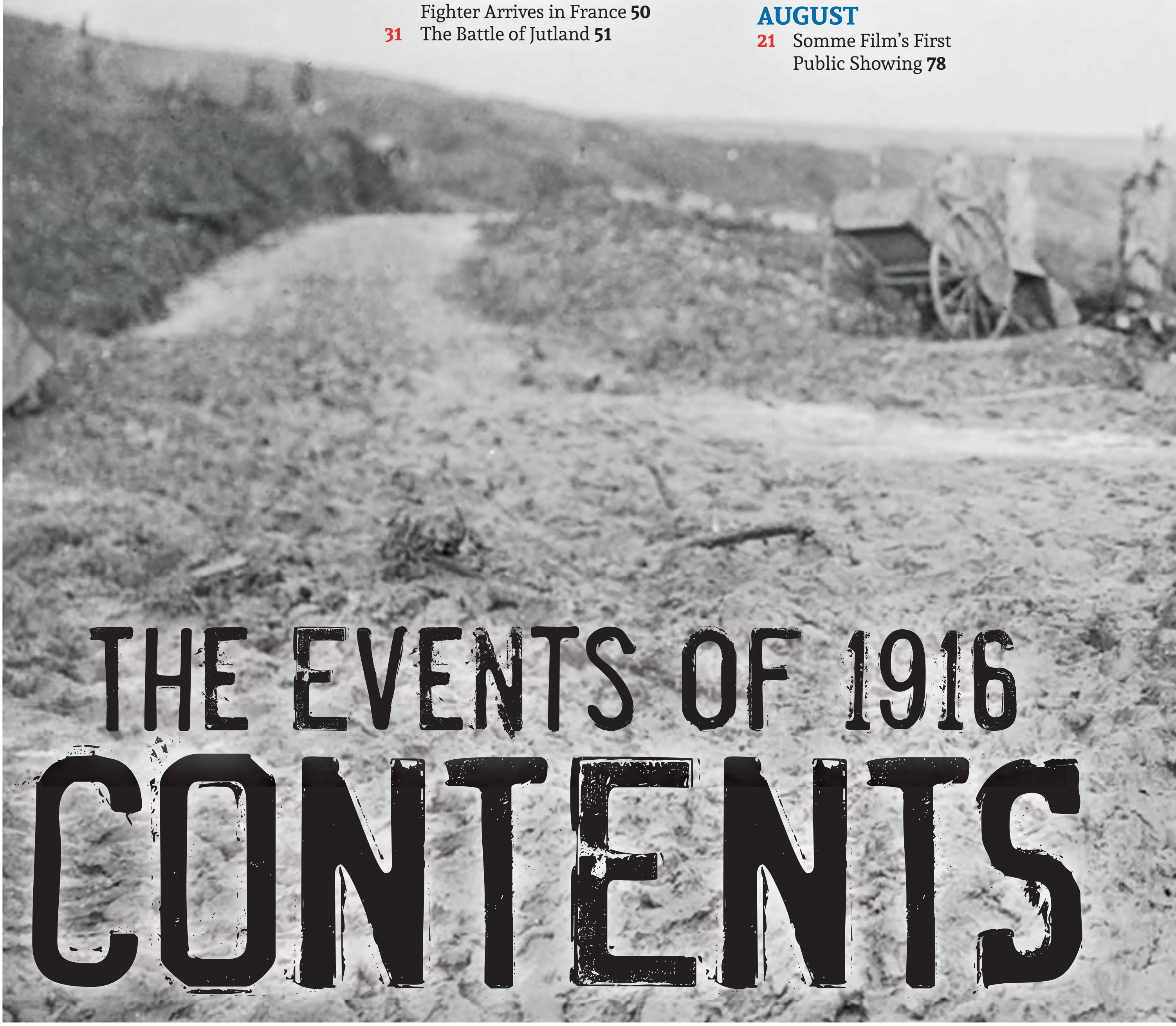
2 The Battle of Mount Sorrel **53**
5 Field Marshal Horatio Herbert Kitchener Killed **54**
8 An Arab Alliance **56**
24 The Somme Bombardment Begins **58**

JULY

1 The First Day of the Battle of the Somme **60**
1 The Lochnagar Mine Exploded **62**
1 The Royal Flying Corps Over the Somme **64**
14 Cavalry Charge on the Somme **66**
15 The Battle of Delville Wood **68**
19 Disaster at Fromelles **70**
23 Australians on the Somme: Fighting at Pozières **73**
26 The Most Successful U-boat Patrol Begins **75**
27 Captain Fryatt Executed **76**

AUGUST

21 Somme Film's First Public Showing **78**



SEPTEMBER

2 Largest Zeppelin Raid of the Great War **80**
3 First Airship Brought Down on British Soil **82**
9 The Capture of Ginchy **84**
12 Silver War Badge Instituted **86**
15 The First Use of Tanks in Battle **87**
15 'Boy' Cornwell's VC is Announced **89**
17 The Red Baron's First 'Kill' **91**
23 Zeppelin Crew Arrested **92**

OCTOBER

1 Shot Down Over Potters Bar **94**
26 The Battle of Dover Strait **98**

NOVEMBER

13 The Battle of the Ancre **99**
18 The End of the Battle of the Somme **101**
21 HMHS *Britannic* Sunk **102**
28 First German Daylight Aeroplane Raid on London **103**

DECEMBER

1 Bruce Bairnsfather's *Bullets and Billets* First Published **104**
5 The Prime Minister Resigns **106**
9 The War Cabinet is Formed **107**
12 Royal Flying Corps Expansion Confirmed **108**
12 Germany's Peace Proposal **109**
22 Three New Ministries Created **111**
22 The Sopwith Camel's Maiden Flight **112**
22 King George's Speech **113**

Editorial **3**
The Third Year of the Great War **6**
The End of the Third Year of the Great War **114**

MAIN PICTURE:
A pack horse laden with trench boots is led through the mud near Beaumont-Hamel in November 1916. (HISTORIC MILITARY PRESS)

THE THIRD YEAR OF THE GREAT WAR: 1916

THE SECOND year of the war had been one of huge disappointment. Failures in Gallipoli, the Shell Scandal and the collapse in confidence in the Liberal Government had eroded the nation's belief in itself. Before 1915, Great Britain had no doubt that it stood supreme amongst the countries of the world; now that supremacy was being challenged and an enormous effort would be needed, both at home and on the battlefield, if the war was to be won, and in 1916, the people of Britain and the Commonwealth responded as never before.

The year began well, with the completion of the withdrawal from Gallipoli. This was achieved with no significant loss of life, and was the most successful aspect of the entire campaign.

Another success was recorded in East Africa where the Germans had taken control of Lake Tanganyika in 1914 with a trio of small gunboats. Following an astonishing suggestion from a big game hunter, the Admiralty sent two boats all the way from the UK to South Africa and then overland for hundreds of miles to reach the lake. By July 1916 Lake Tanganyika was in British hands.

Closer to home, a German battlecruiser squadron with accompanying cruisers and destroyers bombarded the east coast ports of Great Yarmouth and Lowestoft on 25 April. Whilst the principal objective of the raid was to lure Royal Navy ships onto the guns of the waiting High Seas Fleet, the bombardment of these important mine laying/sweeping and submarine bases was in itself of help to the operations of the Kaiserliche Marine. Whilst theses ports were badly damaged and a number of people were killed, the longed-for encounter between the British and German navies failed to materialise.

However, just a few weeks later, at the end of May, that great engagement between the battle fleets of Britain and Germany at last came to pass. In what was to become the largest battle in the history of naval warfare, the two navies met off the coast of Jutland in the North Sea. Since the beginning of the war both Britain and Germany had sought to gain an advantage over their enemy at sea but neither had been able to lure the other into the battle they hoped for. Then a coincidental set of circumstances brought the two great battle fleets to within range of their mighty guns. The Royal Navy

ABOVE: **Soldiers of 'A' Company, 11th Battalion, the Cheshire Regiment, occupy a captured German trench at Ovillers-la-Boisselle on the Somme during July 1916.** (NATIONAL ARCHIVES OF THE NETHERLANDS)

BELOW: **A typical German trench on the Western Front pictured prior to the start of the Battle of the Somme.** (US LIBRARY OF CONGRESS)

BELOW: **A British Mk.IV tank pictured advancing through the ruins of a French village on the Western Front during the First World War.** (HISTORIC MILITARY PRESS)

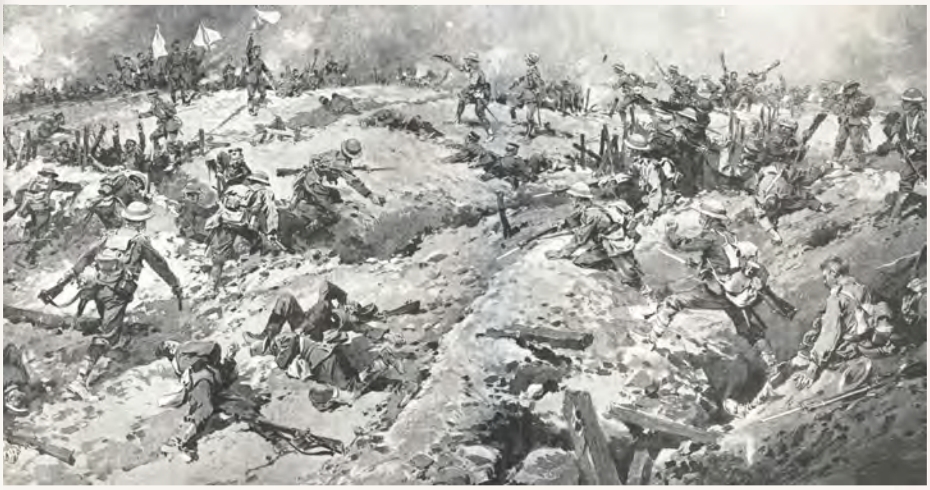
lost heavily in the battle, but their command of the seas was secured and never seriously threatened again until the Second World War.

Death came to the people of Britain not just from the sea, but also from the air, as the Zeppelins continued to sweep across the skies shielded by the darkness of night. Due to the availability of only rudimentary navigational aids these raids were imprecise and bombs could fall from the sky almost anywhere within the airships' flying range. On the night of 31 January/1 February, Zeppelin *L-19* was one of nine Zeppelins that attacked England with varying degrees of success. The captain of *L-19* became hopelessly lost but he managed to bomb a coastal collier, becoming the first and only Zeppelin to sink a ship, before the airship ran out of fuel and crashed into the sea.

The English Channel was also the scene of an attack by German torpedo boat destroyers through the Dover Barrage, a series of mines and anti-submarine nets that had been laid in 1915 to protect shipping crossing to France. On the night of 26/7 October the boats of the Flanders Flotilla set off from the occupied Belgian coast and, taking the boats of the Dover Patrol by surprise were able to sink one destroyer and damage three others before making their escape back across the Channel.

At home men and women worked long hours in the munitions factories, raising output to a level that enabled Field Marshal Haig to shell the German trenches on an unprecedented scale. This was hard and dangerous work and led, on 2 April 1916, to an explosion at a factory at Uplees outside Faversham in Kent that resulted in the greatest loss of life in the history of the British explosives industry.

Other civilians lost their lives as a consequence of the conflict, including passengers on the London, Brighton & South Coast Railway-managed ferry SS *Sussex*. In an unprovoked attack in the English Channel on 24 March 1916, she was sunk by a German submarine. Around fifty people died, including US citizens which almost forced President Wilson into declaring war on Germany. This act brought condemnation from across the globe as did the execution of Charles Fryatt, the captain of a ferry boat that was still operating between the UK and neutral Holland. When attacked by *U-33*, Fryatt saved his vessel by



ABOVE: **An illustration showing British troops storming the Schwaben Redoubt on the Somme. First assaulted on 1 July 1916, a permanent Allied lodgment in this German defensive position was not achieved until the attacks of 26 to 28 September 1916.** (HISTORIC MILITARY PRESS) trying to ram the German submarine. The Germans saw this as an act of war and when they managed to capture his unarmed ferry, Fryatt was arrested and sentenced to death. The world was shocked by the conduct of the German authorities.

Yet not everyone saw Britain and her Allies as the sole occupants of the moral high ground in the war and a Peruvian of Scandinavian extraction was persuaded to spy in the UK on behalf of the Germans. His capture, caused by a surprising lack of attention to detail, led to his execution in April 1916.

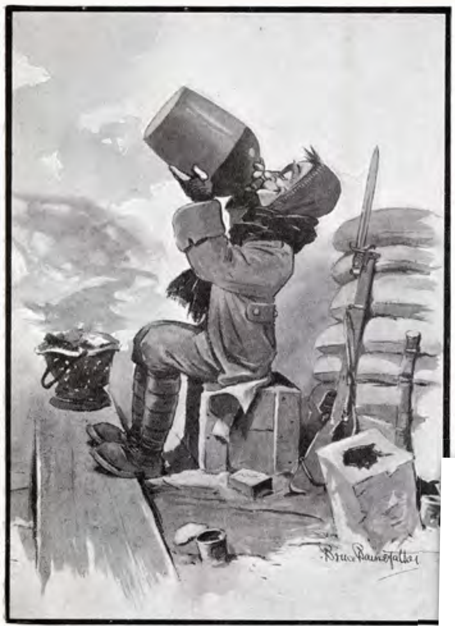
Likewise in Ireland. For generations many in Ireland had pressed for independence from the UK. Attempts to introduce home rule had failed to be approved by Westminster and despite the many promises it seemed that an independent Ireland would only become a reality if the Irish threw off the British yolk by force of arms. After a delegation to the US and Germany, led by Sir Roger Casement, secured the delivery of a large shipment of arms to Ireland, plans were laid to rise up against the British in Dublin and across Ireland over the 1916 Easter weekend. Both Casement and the weapons were intercepted by the British but the rebels still took to the streets, declaring the birth of an Irish Republic. The uprising did not receive the expected widespread and complete support of the population and, after a week of fighting, the rebellion was suppressed.

Rebellion was also in the air in the Middle East, this time promoted and supported by Britain. Vast tracts of the Middle East and the Levant was still under the rule of the ancient, if ailing, Turkish Ottoman Empire. After the Turks had declared war on Britain and its Allies, the Middle East became a key battleground, not only because of the threat to Britain's eastern empire but also because of the growing dependence upon oil from the lands bordering the Arabian Gulf in the increasing mechanized world of the early twentieth century.

In June 1916 an agreement was reached with the Arabs who had already began their fight for freedom from Constantinople. With British and French support the Arabs were able to maintain another front in the war which helped reduce pressure on Russia which was itself already fighting both Germany and Turkey. What the Arabs did not know was that Britain and France had their own plans for the Middle East after the war and the consequential breakup of the Ottoman Empire. In what became known as the Sykes-Picot agreement, Britain, France and Russia planned to carve up the Ottoman lands between them. The effects of that clandestine deal still reverberate across the region today.

British forces had also landed in the Gulf and had pushed towards Baghdad, reaching the town of Kut Al Amara on the River Tigris. The Turks laid siege to the town and all attempts at relieving the British troops resulted in costly defeats. With his men on the verge of starvation, the British commander, Major General Sir Charles Townsend, was forced to surrender, and more than 13,000 men marched into captivity.

The main focus of the war, though, was still on the Western Front. At Verdun and on the Somme the fighting raged with appalling ferocity, and with casualty figures that reached apocalyptic proportions. The attrition continued for month after month with no significant territorial gains achieved by either side. This did not dismay or deter Field Marshal Haig. He believed that for every German soldier killed the defeat of Germany was that bit closer. Time would vindicate his actions, but victory, which by the end of 1916 was still a distant prospect, would be bought at a terrible price. ●



ABOVE: This cartoon, entitled 'The Spirit of our Troops is Excellent', was drawn by the famous First World War humourist and cartoonist Bruce Bairnsfather. The rum ration was a vital part of the soldier's everyday life in the trenches. (HMP)

ABOVE: The Imperial German Navy's battleship SMS *Schleswig-Holstein* fires a salvo during the Battle of Jutland on 31 May 1916. (NARA)

ABOVE: British Army cavalry at the Western Front in France, 1916. (HISTORIC MILITARY PRESS)

GREAT WAR TOURS

Unique, private visits to the battlefields of northern France and Belgium.

Travel in comfort, in a small group of no more than four people, accompanied by an expert military guide. Choose an established itinerary, or create a tour specially tailored to your interests.

Let us make your journey of remembrance as special as it deserves to be.

We will remember them.

0800 9700 711
www.greatwartours.co.uk

FIRST WORLD WAR
IN THE AIR

The Royal Air Force Museum London,
Grahame Park Way,
Colindale, London NW9 5LL

T: 020 8205 2266
www.rafmuseum.org
SATNAV NW9 5QW

NOW OPEN
FREE ADMISSION

heritage lottery fund
LOTTERY FUNDED

BAE SYSTEMS
INSPIRED WORK

ROYAL AIR FORCE museum LONDON

CHURCHILL TAKES COMMAND

1 JANUARY 1916

WINSTON CHURCHILL was replaced as First Lord of the Admiralty by Arthur Balfour in May 1915 and relegated to the post of Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster. Though a very junior position, it nevertheless commanded a seat in the Cabinet and it enabled Churchill to continue to influence government policy. On 11 November 1915, Prime Minister H.H. Asquith announced the formation of a new Cabinet War Committee which alone would from then on dictate war policy. That new body would not include Winston Churchill.

The following day Churchill resigned from the government. He was determined to play a part in the war and if he could not do it in Parliament then he would do it on the battlefield. He was a Major in the Oxfordshire Hussars and, as the regiment was already in France, Churchill decided to join it immediately.

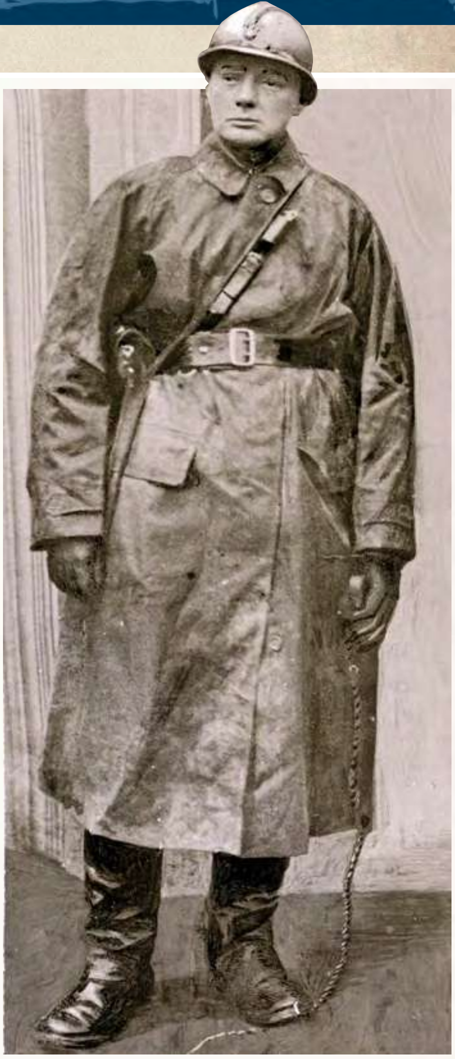
Major Churchill crossed to France on 18 November, and was met on his arrival by an aide of the Commander-in-Chief of the British Expeditionary Force, Field Marshal Sir John French. Sir John sought to find a role for the former Cabinet minister that would seem appropriate to his status. He suggested to Winston that he should become one of his aides-de-camp at GHQ, or that he might take command of a brigade. This was hardly a difficult choice. Winston, a descendant of the Duke of Marlborough, had long dreamed of leading men into battle. The prospect of becoming a Brigadier-General must have been appealing.

There was not an immediate vacancy at that level for Winston, but war always presents opportunities and French promised to arrange a brigade for him as soon as possible. This was not unwelcome because Winston felt that he needed some experience in the front line before taking command of a brigade of three or four battalions. This, of course, made complete sense and French was glad to facilitate it. Winston asked if he could gain that experience with the Guards and, on 19 November, Major General Lord Cavan, the commander of the Guards Division, was asked to visit St Omer, where Churchill's request was put to him. It was decided that Winston would have his training with the Grenadiers.

Churchill spent the next four weeks with the Grenadiers in and out of the front line, waiting for his expected promotion. Yet allowing Churchill to jump from Major to Brigadier-General would not have been acceptable to other deserving officers plus his political enemies in Westminster, particularly Asquith, were determined that Winston should not be given a brigade.

This was finally communicated to Churchill. The most that he could be offered was command of a battalion, with the rank of Lieutenant Colonel. He had proven to be quite fearless during his time with the Grenadiers and a front line position of that nature was acceptable to him, on the basis that if he performed well in command of a battalion, he would be considered for a brigade.

It was on New Year's Day 1916 that Winston was informed it was a battalion in the 9th (Scottish) Division that he would command. That battalion was the 6th (Service) Battalion Royal Scots Fusiliers. ●



ABOVE: Lieutenant-Colonel Winston Churchill pictured in uniform, sporting his characteristic blue French Army helmet, during the winter of 1915-1916.

ABOVE: Churchill and the men of his battalion arrived at Ploegsteert on 26 January 1916. They would find a scene not dissimilar to this view of one of the village's snow-covered shell-blasted streets which was taken in the winter of 1916/17. The village is at the very south of the area associated with Ypres; in fact it is not regarded as part of the Ypres Salient by some.

(COURTESY OF THE AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL; P01835.066)

GALLIPOLI PENINSULA EVACUATED

8 JANUARY 1916

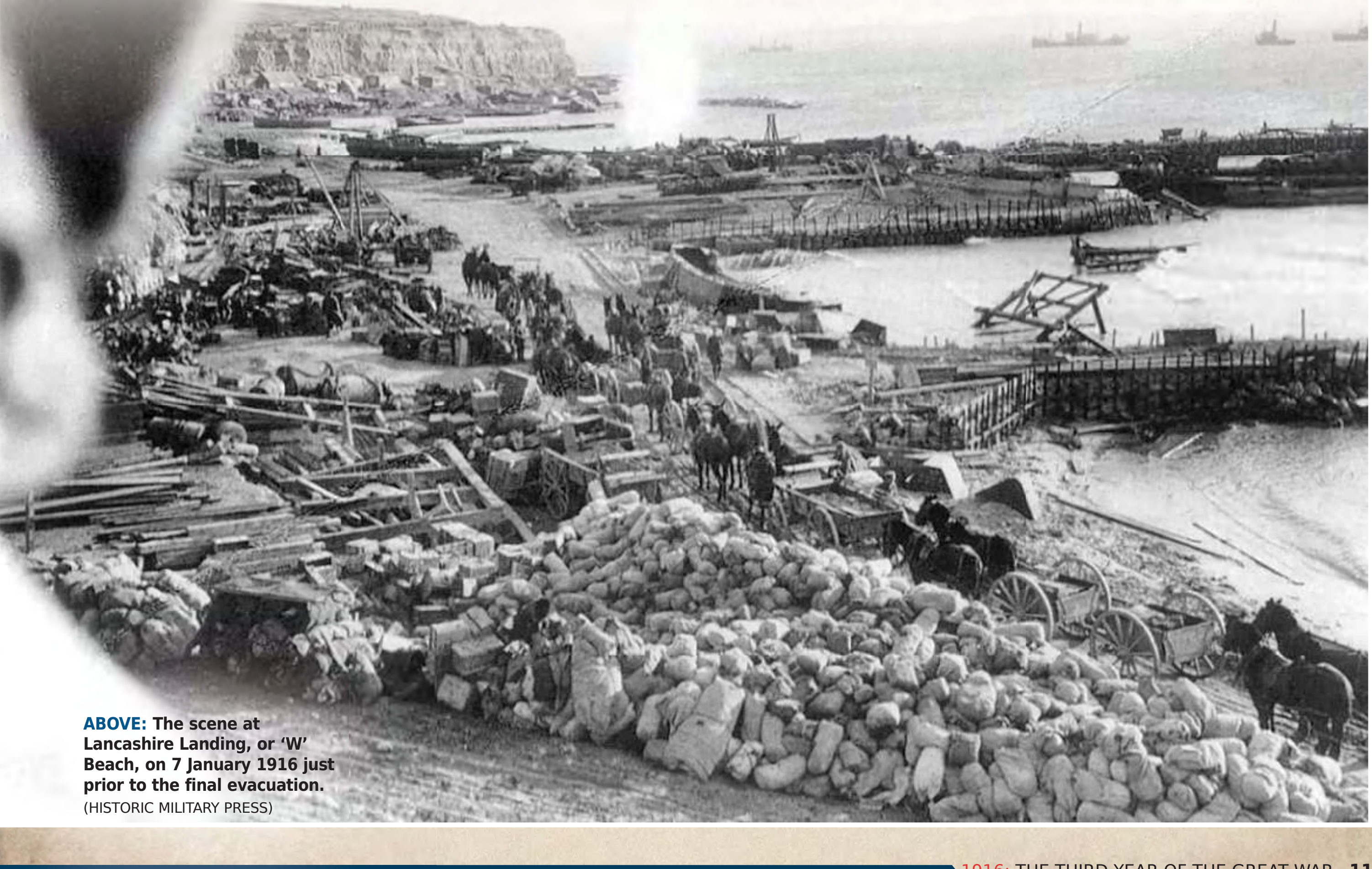
ABOVE: **A view of Lancashire Landing, or 'W' Beach, from where the final British evacuation from the Gallipoli Peninsula was made.**
(HISTORIC MILITARY PRESS)

FOLLOWING REPEATED failures and the loss of more than 200,000 men, towards the end of 1915 the decision had been taken to evacuate the Gallipoli Peninsula. By the end of the year most of the soldiers had been successfully withdrawn. The troops had all been embarked from Anzac Cove and Suvla Bay, leaving just those occupying Capes Helles at the entrance to the Dardanelles Strait. In the earlier evacuations, measures had been adopted to conceal the embarkation of the troops, but the Turks were probably aware that the offensive was being abandoned by the Allies and they were unlikely to be deceived again.

In an effort to maintain the appearance of continuing the campaign, on 29 December 1915 the 52nd (Lowland) Division attacked and captured a portion of the Turkish trenches, holding the position in the face of repeated counter-attacks. It would be the commander of this division, Major General the Hon. H.A. Lawrence, who would be responsible for the final evacuation arrangements.

A withdrawal whilst in contact with the enemy is one of the most difficult and hazardous manoeuvres in warfare. Not only is this because the number of men in the front line is reduced to a rear guard, but also because due the actual manoeuvre the majority of the troops are out of position with their backs turned towards the enemy. An attack upon retreating troops can easily turn an organised disengagement into an utter rout.

In order, therefore, to present a strong front to the enemy up until the very last moment, ▷▷



ABOVE: **The scene at Lancashire Landing, or 'W' Beach, on 7 January 1916 just prior to the final evacuation.**
(HISTORIC MILITARY PRESS)

it was necessary to continue to shell the Turkish positions. Consequently, one British 6-inch gun and six French heavy guns would have to be abandoned as the rear guard sailed away. Positions were prepared to cover the withdrawal of the troops and men were selected from the 13th (Western) Division to occupy these entrenched locations. These covered the shoreline from what was known as 'X' Beach through to the village Sedd-el-Bahr at the eastern end of 'V' Beach. As the withdrawing troops passed within the line of these defences they would come under the orders of Major General Lawrence. As the withdrawal was to be conducted at night, staff officers would be ready to guide the men through the darkness down to the waiting boats.

The time fixed for the last parties to leave the front trenches was 23.45 hours, in order to allow enough time for the majority of the troops to get away before the front line was vacated. There were to be three waves of departing men and it was calculated that it would take between two and three hours for each wave of men to reach the beaches. This would give the boats time to make their journeys to the ships waiting offshore and return to collect the next wave. The maximum possible number of men would be taken in the first wave so that there would not be men left behind at the end and to allow space for any casualties who would require more room in the boats.

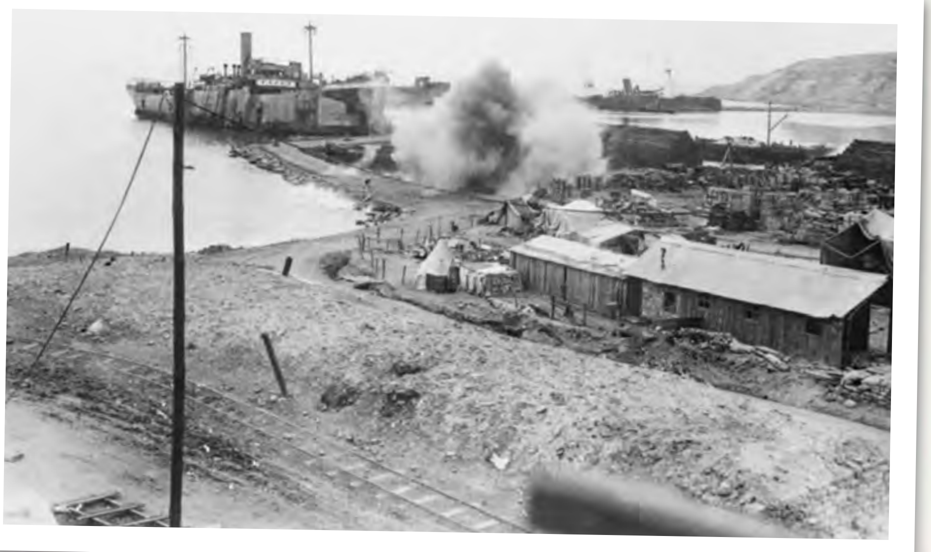
With everything planned and prepared all that remained was for a period of calm weather. It was hoped that the evacuation could take place soon because the Turks had stepped up their shelling of the Allied positions and casualties continued to mount.

Dawn on 7 January 1916 heralded a bright, calm day, with a light breeze from the south. There was every indication that these conditions would continue and, in the opinion of the Meteorological Officer, no important change was to be expected for at least twenty-four hours.

Lieutenant General Sir Charles Munro, who had taken over command in the Dardanelles on 28 October 1915, described in his official despatch the events of that night: 'About 7 p.m. the breeze freshened considerably from the south-west, the most unfavourable quarter, but the first trip, timed for 8 p.m., was despatched without difficulty. The wind, however, continued to rise until, by 11 p.m., the connecting pier between the hulks and the shore at 'W' Beach was washed away by heavy seas, and further embarkation into destroyers from these hulks became impracticable. In spite of these difficulties the second trips, which commenced at 11.30 p.m., were carried out well up to time, and the embarkation of guns continued uninterruptedly.' Then suddenly everything changed.

It had been stated earlier in the evening that a 'hostile' submarine had been spotted travelling down the Strait and at around midnight the Majestic-class battleship HMS *Prince George*, which was protecting the embarkation, was struck by a torpedo which failed to explode. The warships of the squadron under Vice Admiral Sir J. de Robeck were to cover the evacuation by shelling the Turkish positions. But de Robeck decided that, with an enemy submarine in the area, he could no longer leave his capital ships stationary close to the shore.

There could be no cancellation of the evacuation at this stage, however, and it had to be hoped that the men could all get away before the Turks realised what had happened. At 01.30 hours on the morning of 8 January it was reported that the embarkation from Gully Beach had been completed and the last of the lighters was about to push off, leaving only the men at 'W' Beach. Then, at 02.10 a telephone message was received that one of the lighters was aground and could not be re-floated. Another lighter was sent to try and rescue the men and the stranded boat. This, though, was going to take possibly up to an hour, so at 02.30 hours it was decided to move the 160 men on board, who had managed to get back to the shore, to 'W' Beach and evacuate them from there.



ABOVE: A shell bursts near the SS *River Clyde* during the evacuation from the tip of the Gallipoli Peninsula. (COURTESY OF THE AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL; H10393)

ABOVE: Lieutenant General Sir Stanley Maude, KCB, CMG, DSO pictured after his elevation to commander of Mesopotamian Expeditionary Force. Maude, as a Major-General, commanded the 13th (Western) Division during its evacuation from the Gallipoli Peninsula. He later wrote: 'I do not think we left behind us £200 worth of stuff worth having. I got away all my guns and ammunition and we even destroyed the sandbags which we had to leave in the parapets by ripping them with bayonets or clasp knives to make them useless.' (HISTORIC MILITARY PRESS)

By 02.40 hours the swell had become so great that embarkation was proving extremely difficult, even raising fears that the operation might have to be temporarily halted. The sailors, though, persisted and at 03.30 hours the final evacuation of British troops from the Gallipoli Peninsula was completed without loss (the Royal Newfoundland Regiment had been selected to form part of the rearguard and finally withdrew from the Peninsula on 9 January 1916). Despite predictions of thousands of casualties, 35,268 troops, 3,689 horses and mules, 127 guns, 328 vehicles and 1,600 tons of equipment were evacuated. It was a remarkable achievement.

Large quantities of stores and supplies had to be left behind but these were set on fire by timed fuzes after the last man had embarked. Two magazines of ammunition and explosives were also successfully blown up at 04.00 hours. These fires and explosions alerted the Turks who immediately fired red flares into the sky and then began a heavy shelling of the abandoned Allied positions. But by then it was all too late. The British and the French had all gone. ●

SS APPAM CAPTURED

16 JANUARY 1916

THE ELDER Dempster liner SS *Appam* sailed from West Africa with 168 passengers including a number of prominent individuals from Sierra Leone, Lagos and other towns from that region, plus a crew of 133. Her last port of call was Dakar, from where she departed on 11 January. She was due in at Plymouth about six days later but was overdue. As time passed and there was still no sign of *Appam*, fears grew that she had been lost at sea. 'Anxiety naturally grew every day,' ran an article in *The Times*, 'and the obvious inference was drawn that the German Navy had added to the list of its glorious deeds – another unarmed merchant ship and a shipful of non-combatants sent to the bottom of the sea'.

Then, towards the end of January, a homeward-bound steamer, the SS *Tregantle*, arrived at Hull and reported that she had picked up one of the *Appam*'s lifeboats off the north-west coast of Africa. No more was heard of the missing liner and in shipping circles she was given up as lost. That was until the morning of 2 February when the liner steamed into the US port of Norfolk, Virginia.

'A tremendous sensation has been caused by the arrival off Old Point Comfort to-day of the British steam ship *Appam*, flying the German flag,' ran a report in *The Times*. 'The Appam dropped anchor at 5.45 this morning and was soon afterwards boarded by Customs officials. She is in charge of a German prize crew of 12 men alleged to belong to a German submarine. No-one has been allowed to leave the ship pending the decision of her status.'

It transpired that the liner had been intercepted by the German auxiliary cruiser SMS *Möwe*, which put a prize crew onboard and sailed to a neutral country, the United States. *Möwe* had left Wilhelmshaven on 29 December 1915 on what was an enormously successful patrol. By the time she returned to Germany on 4 April 1916, her skipper, Nikolaus zu Dohna-Schlodien, could claim to have captured or sunk fifteen ships.

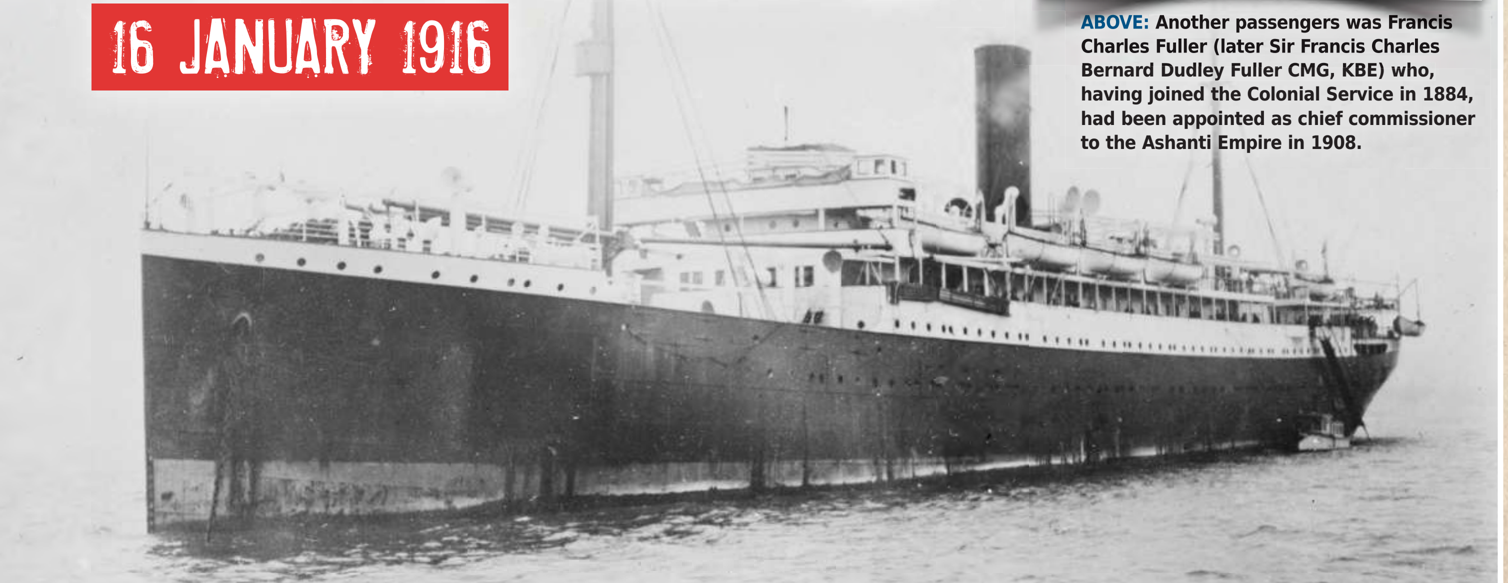
The captured passengers and crew of *Appam* were all safe and it was immediately obvious that they would be released. They were able to relate their experiences to reporters. The liner was captured in the middle of a pleasant sunny afternoon when most of the passengers were on deck.

▷▷

ABOVE: **One of the passengers on *Appam* when it was seized was Mrs L.M. Riley and her young daughter Emilie. Their names were included of a full list of passengers and crew published in *The New York Times* on 2 February 1916.**

(ALL IMAGES US LIBRARY OF CONGRESS)

ABOVE: **Another passengers was Francis Charles Fuller (later Sir Francis Charles Bernard Dudley Fuller CMG, KBE) who, having joined the Colonial Service in 1884, had been appointed as chief commissioner to the Ashanti Empire in 1908.**



ABOVE: **The SS *Appam* pictured prior to her capture by the crew of the German auxiliary cruiser SMS *Möwe*. After its eventual return to its owners, *Appam* was renamed *Mandingo* for the rest of the war. Thereafter she traded for many years on routes to West Africa and was scrapped in 1936.**

ABOVE: **The captain of the SMS *Möwe*, Nikolaus zu Dohna-Schlodien. He was one of only two German officers who received the highest military awards of the five main German states during the First World War.**

'No-one appears to have suspected the danger from the innocent tramp steamer, which came creeping up astern, until a shot passed over the *Appam*'s bows,' ran the words of one report. 'There was then no chance of escape. Hidden guns were suddenly revealed, and the stranger showed herself as an armed cruiser. Within a short time the *Appam* was in the hands of a prize crew, and the passengers had settled down to make the best they could of the situation. They were well treated by Lieutenant Berg and the German sailors, and the social life of the ship was interfered with only to the extent that rations were severely cut down.'

Apparently the passengers did discuss a scheme to recapture the vessel from the Germans but it was regarded by the majority to be 'rather too desperate a venture' to be put into operation. Another account was given by Dr. Norman F. Deane of the West African Medical Service:

'We had noticed the boat keeping up to us, but regarded her as a tramp. When the shot frightened our passengers out of their afternoon doze, the Moewe [*sic*] unfurled the German naval ensign. There was a good deal of speculation as to what would happen, and, though we all put on our lifebelts, no one showed any outward sign of alarm. As the Moewe came alongside, we saw her guns in the bow threatening us. There were two guns near the forward hatch, and one in the stern. I counted nine guns altogether. They appeared to be of 4.7-inch and 6-inch calibre. We could of course, do nothing, and presently a boat came across to us from the Moewe. A rather decent officer came on board, and at last told the passengers they would not want their lifebelts. He then went on the bridge and saw the skipper. A little later a message went round that all naval and military officers on board were to go to the German boat. As a doctor, I held the temporary rank of second lieutenant. I accordingly had to go with the group.

'When we reached the other boat we were put down in the hold, where we found the crews of about seven boats that had been captured. The place was packed and there was hardly room to breathe. We got word after a time that there would be some food, but that we should have to scramble for it. The food proved to be large tins of tea and ship biscuits, and we had to use cigarette tins in order to drink the tea. Most of the prisoners were white men. In case of an attack on the boat they would have had no chance of escape. There was only one narrow gangway leading up from the hold, and when the raider was attempting a capture, I am told, there was a guard set over this approach. The men had to sleep on the floor, and there was practically no water for washing purposes.'

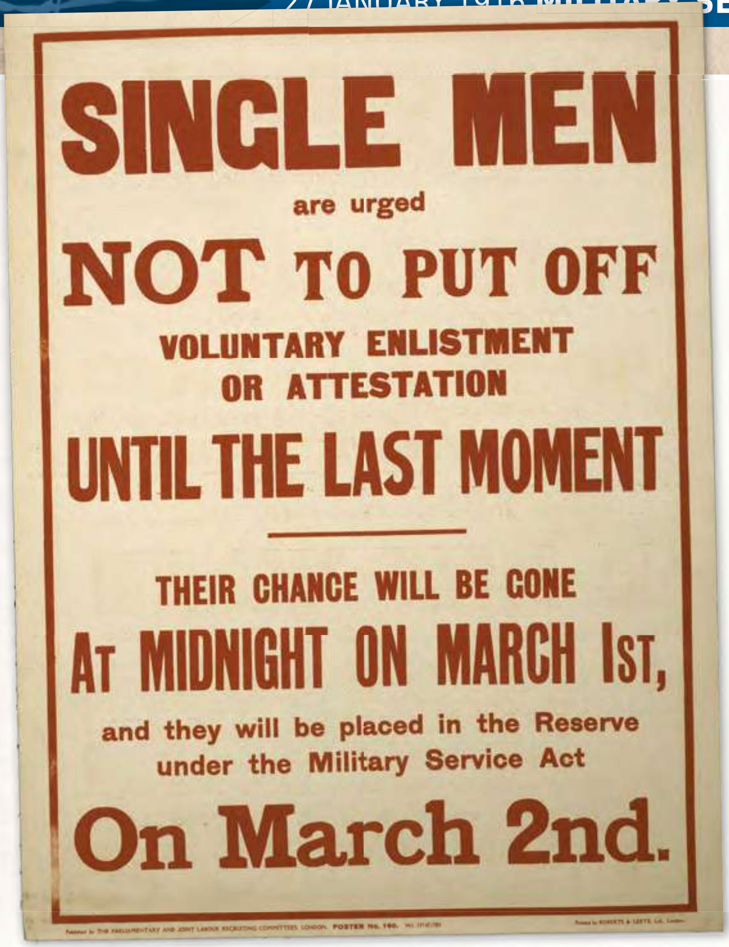
Miss Coupe, a nursing sister from a hospital at Lokoja in northern Nigeria, explained how the lifeboat came to be spotted and picked up by the Hull-bound ship: 'There was a good deal of coming and going between the German cruiser and the *Appam*, and the ship's boats were used for this purpose. One of these boats when it was launched began to fill with water, and the Germans regarded it as unseaworthy and left it to sink.' The boat remained afloat, however, and many miles away from the scene of the capture was found, giving rise to the general belief that *Appam* had been lost.

The fate of the German prize crew and the not inconsiderable cargo was another matter altogether. A note given out by the US was that because *Appam* was flying the German naval ensign, not that of a merchant ship, she might well be considered a warship and therefore the vessel would be impounded and the prize crew interred for the duration of the war.

Perhaps inevitably, having put into the US, *Appam* fell into the hands of lawyers. After much legal wrangling, on 6 March 1917, the US Supreme Court ruled that 'a belligerent nation may not bring prizes of war into a neutral port'. As a consequence *Appam* and its cargo, valued at between three and four million dollars, were delivered to the British owners two weeks later. ●

ABOVE RIGHT: **SS *Appam* after being boarded by US customs officials.**

BELOW: **SS *Appam* anchored in the natural harbour of Hampton Roads, Virgina.**



SINGLE MEN

are urged

NOT TO PUT OFF

VOLUNTARY ENLISTMENT
OR ATTESTATION

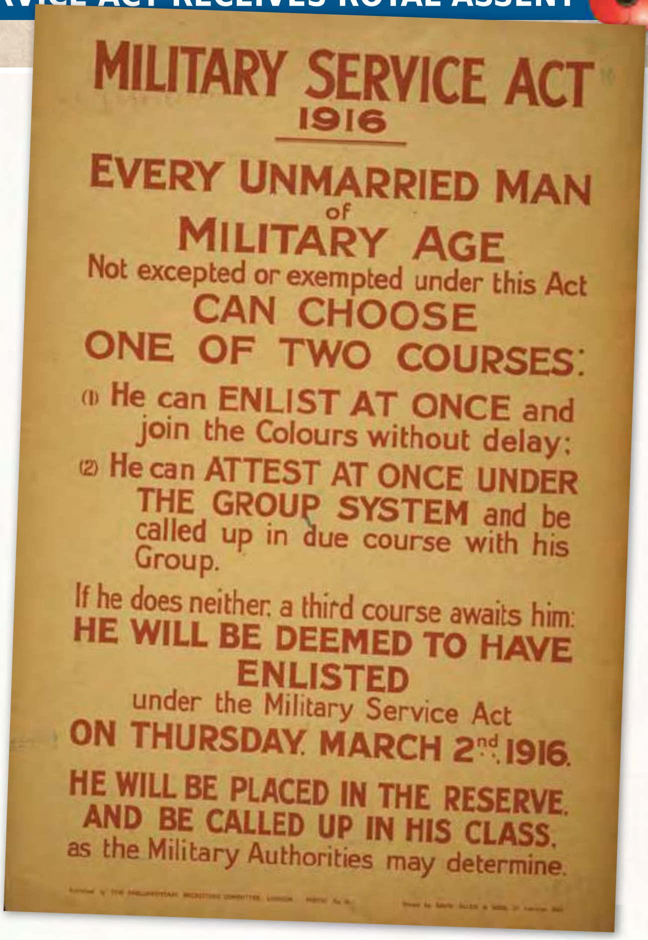
UNTIL THE LAST MOMENT

THEIR CHANCE WILL BE GONE

AT MIDNIGHT ON MARCH 1ST,

and they will be placed in the Reserve
under the Military Service Act

On March 2nd.



MILITARY SERVICE ACT
1916

EVERY UNMARRIED MAN
of
MILITARY AGE
Not excepted or exempted under this Act
CAN CHOOSE
ONE OF TWO COURSES:

(1) He can ENLIST AT ONCE and join the Colours without delay:

(2) He can ATTEST AT ONCE UNDER THE GROUP SYSTEM and be called up in due course with his Group.

If he does neither, a third course awaits him:
HE WILL BE DEEMED TO HAVE
ENLISTED
under the Military Service Act
ON THURSDAY, MARCH 2nd 1916.

HE WILL BE PLACED IN THE RESERVE.
AND BE CALLED UP IN HIS CLASS,
as the Military Authorities may determine.

MILITARY SERVICE ACT RECEIVES ROYAL ASSENT

27 JANUARY 1916

DESPITE THE fact that large numbers of men had volunteered to join the British armed forces in the first two years of war, by the end of the second year of the war it had become accepted that the rate of voluntary enlistment would be insufficient to sustain the UK's war effort.

Of those who had volunteered to fight, one author wrote that 'the total response to Lord Derby's appeal proved, numerically, enormously large. Upwards of 2,800,000 men offered themselves, this in itself being a fine tribute to the old voluntary system. But when the figures came to be analysed, and the men themselves to be examined, the total number available for service was disappointing.' Indeed, by the end of 1915 the Government had reached the conclusion that a level of compulsion was required and, on 27 January, the Military Service Act (1916) gained Royal Assent. Along with the Defence of the Realm Act, which had been introduced in 1914, it was possibly the most important piece of legislation in placing Britain onto a 'total war' footing.

The Bill that went on to become the Act was introduced to the House of Commons on 5 January by the Prime Minister, H.H. Asquith. Despite the fact that conscription – compulsory active service – had deeply divided not only Parliament but the entire nation, the Act came into force on 2 March 1916. Such was the depth of feeling, in April 1916, for example, over 200,000 people had demonstrated against the Act in Trafalgar Square.

The new Act specified that men from 18 to 41 years old were liable to be called up for service in the army unless they were married, widowed with children, serving in the Royal Navy, a minister of religion, or working in one of a number of reserved occupations. An application for a certificate of exemption, usually temporary and issued with conditions attached, could be made, either by the individual concerned or his employer, through a series of Military Service Tribunals which were established across the country, under certain circumstances. These included instances where 'serious hardship would ensue owing to his exceptional financial or business obligations or domestic position' or 'ill health or infirmity'. Conscientious objectors – men who objected to fighting on moral grounds – were also exempted, and were in most cases given civilian jobs or non-fighting roles at the front.

One correspondent, whose comments were published in *The Times* on 31 January 1916, was of the opinion that the Military Service Act had been too slow in coming: 'The action which we are taking now should have been taken early in 1915, and that the months now ahead of us should have been devoted to the creation of 30 new divisions, so that we might have possessed this coming summer a large strategic reserve fit to throw into the scales of war at the decisive point and at the decisive hour. This was not possible without a stronger dose of compulsion, a greater restriction of the lists of reserved trades, and a preliminary determination that trade should take second place to victory.'

A second Act in May 1916 extended liability for military service to married men, whilst a third Act in 1918 extended the upper age limit to 51. ●

REDUCED

AN ILLUSTRATED HISTORY OF THE FIRST YEAR OF THE GREAT WAR

AN ILLUSTRATED HISTORY OF THE FIRST YEAR OF THE GREAT WAR
1914
KEY
The Battle of Mons, The First VCs, The Miracle of the
The War at Sea, First Ypres, In the Trenches, The Ea
Under Attack, Britain's First Air Raid, The Christmas

JUST £3.99*

A HISTORY OF CONFLICT BRITAIN AT WAR SPECIAL

Europe had stumbled into the most deadly and destructive conflict in its history. No-one knew how it would be fought; no-one knew how it would end. Those initial few critical months of the First World War are graphically portrayed in unique images and vivid prose. **This 132-page special magazine includes:**

THE ARMY IN FRANCE

The British Expeditionary Force fires its first shots of the war as it faces overwhelming odds. A desperate fighting retreat is transformed into victory at Le Cateau and the 'Miracle' of the Marne.

IN THE NARROW SEAS

At sea the Royal Navy flexes its muscles, drawing the German fleet into battles in the North Sea. German ships bombard the British east coast.

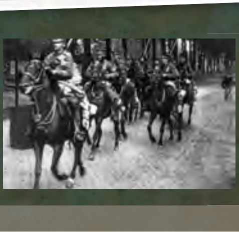
IN THE AIR

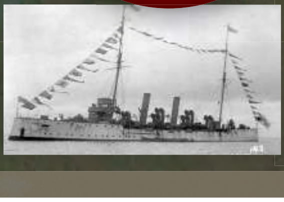
The Royal Flying Corps in action for the first time. German aircraft bomb Britain.

ACROSS THE GLOBE

Across the oceans the Royal Navy and the Imperial German Navy battle to the death in the Cocos Islands, the Falklands and East Africa. German overseas territories are attacked by British Empire forces.

AND MUCH MORE!





ORDER DIRECT!

JUST £3.99+FREE P&P*

*Free 2nd class P&P on all UK & BFPO orders. Overseas charges apply.

649/14

Free P&P* when you order online at
www.keypublishing.com/shop

OR

Call UK: 01780 480404
Overseas: +44 1780 480404
Monday to Friday 9am-5:30pm

ZEPPELIN L-19 LOST AT SEA

2 FEBRUARY 1916

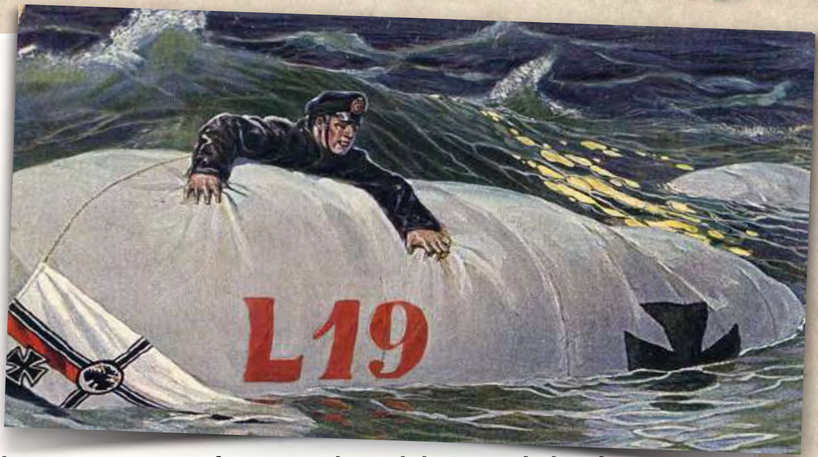
DESPITE THEIR fearsome reputation the huge German airships experienced only limited success in their operations against the UK during the First World War. In fact, German airship crews had little better than a fifty-fifty chance of survival on each mission, with two out of every five Zeppelins being lost. Such was the case with Zeppelin *L-19*, but in his one and only mission *Kapitänleutnant* Odo Loewe accomplished something no other Zeppelin commander achieved.

Well before noon on 31 January 1916, nearly a hundred men, pulling on long ropes, brought the new *L-19* out of her shed at the Tondern airship base. Once they had got her moving, she floated obediently to the slightest pressure on the long handling lines. Her handlers, like giant tug-of-war teams, eased the airship round her moorings until she was facing directly into the slight breeze. Finally, the engines were started and the last of the full crew of sixteen embarked. The noise from each engine rose from gentle grumbles to throaty screams as they were each given several run-up tests to full power.

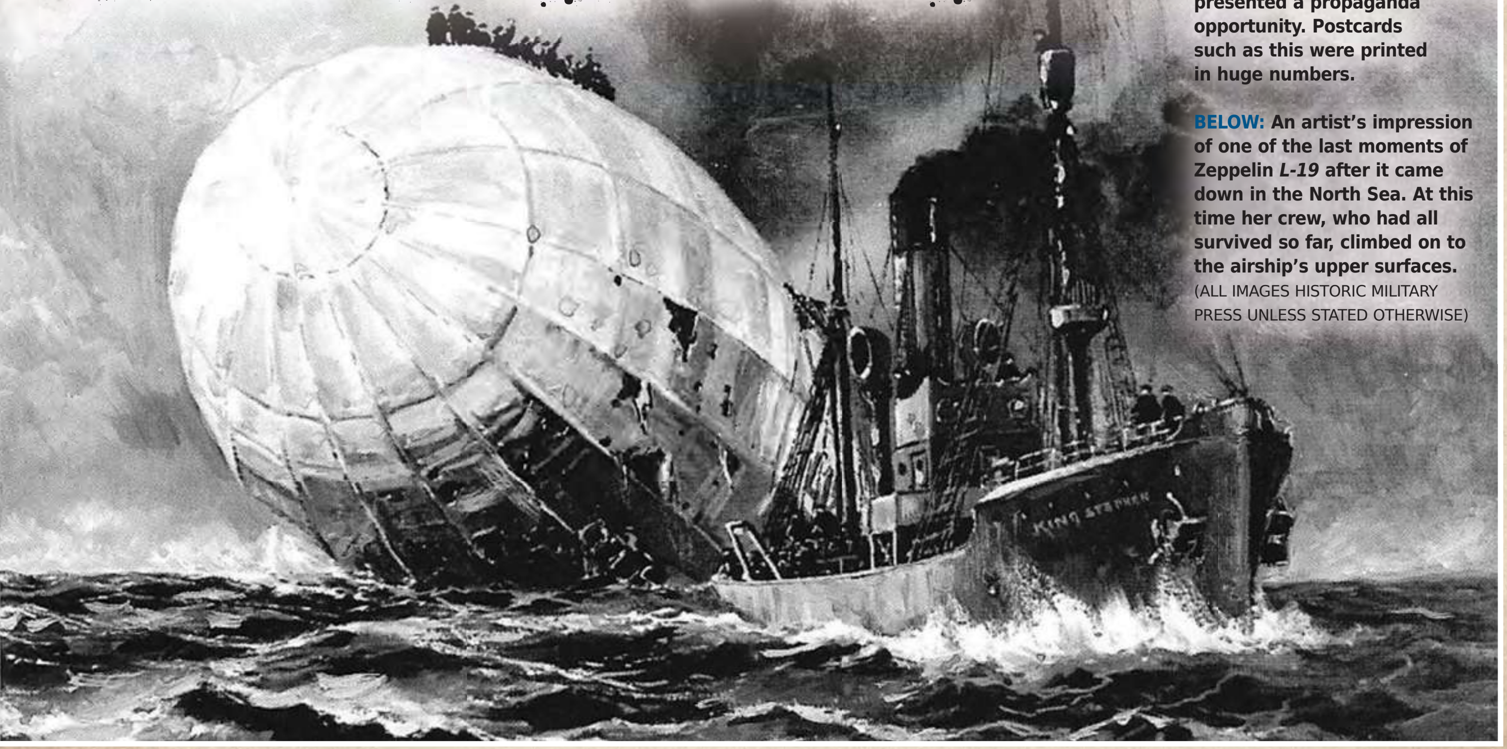
The young commander of *L-19* duly gave the order to let slip her moorings and the brand new 'Super-Zepp' rose on an even keel before climbing round to set course for her very first war mission. Her time of departure was logged as 12.15 hours, nine minutes after her sister ship *L-20* which was also to take part in this mass raid of nine Zeppelins. The force was led by the naval airship division commander, Peter Strasser, in *L-11*. His orders to all the ships were to 'attack England, middle and south, and if possible to concentrate on attacking Liverpool'.

Timing of lift-off was always arranged so that the Zeppelins would arrive over their targets at night, preferably when there was no full moon. Navigators should then still be able to see the English coast at dusk and set an accurate course for the target. This ideally would mean they would be over the target at the darkest time, could drop their bombs and then be well on their way home before daybreak.

All nine airships crossed the English coast far to the south of their intended course for Liverpool. In fact ground mist and low fog over the coast itself prevented many of them realising they were no longer over the North Sea!



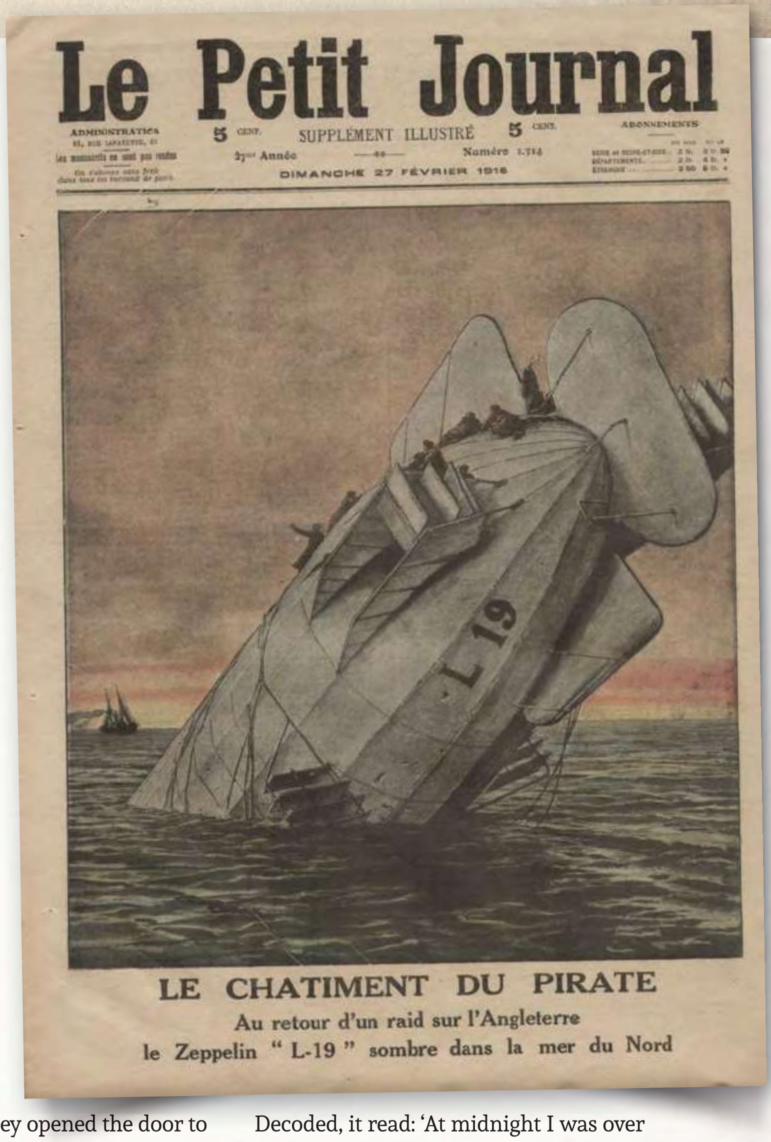
TOP RIGHT: To the Germans, the circumstances surrounding the loss of *L-19* and her crew presented a propaganda opportunity. Postcards such as this were printed in huge numbers.



BELOW: An artist's impression of one of the last moments of Zeppelin *L-19* after it came down in the North Sea. At this time her crew, who had all survived so far, climbed on to the airship's upper surfaces.

(ALL IMAGES HISTORIC MILITARY PRESS UNLESS STATED OTHERWISE)

LEFT: **A portrait of *Kapitänleutnant* Odo Loewe, circa 1915.** (US LIBRARY OF CONGRESS)



Le Petit Journal

ADMINISTRATION

5 CENT. SUPPLÉMENT ILLUSTRÉ 5 CENT.

ABONNEMENTS

27me Année

Numéro 1.314

DIMANCHE 27 FÉVRIER 1916

LE CHATIMENT DU PIRATE

Au retour d'un raid sur l'Angleterre
le Zeppelin " L-19 " sombre dans la mer du Nord

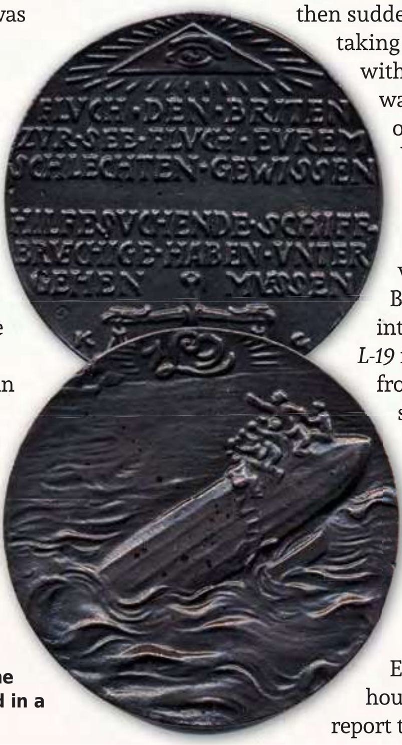
RIGHT: **An account of the loss of *L-19* was published in the French newspaper *Le Petit Journal* on 27 February 1916. The headline stated 'The Punishment of a Pirate'. As well as dividing British public opinion – Captain Martin was condemned by some for leaving the German airmen to die and praised by others for putting the safety of his ship and crew first – the incident received world-wide publicity.**

Zeppelin after Zeppelin could be heard by British radio stations calling up German direction-finding stations at Nordholz and Bruges in an attempt to establish where they were. The elevator man in *L-19* struggled to keep her above 6,500 feet as ice built up on the hull. Loewe's messages, intercepted by the British, suggested that he was completely lost, though he suddenly seemed to be heartened by the sight of British searchlights playing on the clouds ahead of him. He took this as a sign that he was approaching Liverpool.

British radio intercepts told a different story. They revealed that *L-19* crossed the coast at Sherringham in Norfolk. After that it wandered all over the place and was recorded as being over England and its coast for nearly nine hours. Loewe's crew used up most of its bombs on Burton-on-Trent and, possibly, Birmingham.

It was probably as *L-19* was heading for home across the Thames estuary that two lights were spotted on the water below. They belonged to the small 957-ton coastal collier *Franz Fischer*, a requisitioned former German vessel which was anchored in mid-channel with lights on the bow and stern.

The skipper, Captain John Collings, had been hailed from the dimly-lit bridge of a Royal Navy torpedo boat, warning him to beware of German mines on the surface about four miles ahead and advising him to hold station as mine-sweepers were on their way. Collings had heeded the warning and had dropped anchor. Then, came the noise of aircraft engines. The collier's engineer and the captain jumped up and went through the short alley-way towards the deck. As they opened the door to the outside, there was a terrific explosion and both men were knocked down, and back, into the cabin by a great mass of seawater.



RIGHT: **Another part of the German propaganda effort following the loss of *L-19* was this commemorative medal designed by Karl Goetz. The events were also recreated in a German propaganda film.**

The ship took a heavy list to port and then suddenly sank like a stone, taking most of the men down with her. Captain Collings was lost along with twelve of his sixteen crew. *L-19* became the first and only Zeppelin to sink a ship.

Loewe, however, did not live to enjoy his unique victory. At 03.45 hours, British ground stations intercepted a message from *L-19* requesting bearings from the German radio stations. Back-tracking on the replies, British intelligence put her somewhere between King's Lynn and Norwich. Loewe, on the other hand, must have believed he had crossed the whole of England for, at 05.37 hours, he sent a coded attack report to his Tondern base. Decoded, it read: 'At midnight I was over the West coast. Orientation and attack there impossible due to thick fog. Dropped incendiaries. Dropped 1,600kg of bombs on several big factories in Sheffield.'

Many hours later, 16.05 hours, a further signal was picked up: 'Radio equipment at times out of order. Three engines out of order. Approximate position Borkum Island. Wind is favourable.' Unfortunately for him radio location really put him further south – near the Dutch island of Ameland. Radio location was right. Zeppelins were not welcome over neutral Dutch territory. Dutch sentries reported her low over the island at 17.00 hours. Though they thought she was lost and in difficulties, they opened up with everything they had. They hit her repeatedly until she disappeared again out to sea and into the mist.

At some point during the night of 1-2 February, *L-19* came down in the North Sea. It was still afloat the next day when it was discovered by the crew of the Grimsby steam trawler *King Stephen*. The trawler's crew refused to rescue the German survivors – their captain, William Martin, citing the fact that they were unarmed and could have been overwhelmed. They sailed away leaving Loewe and his men to their fate. None of them were seen alive again. ●

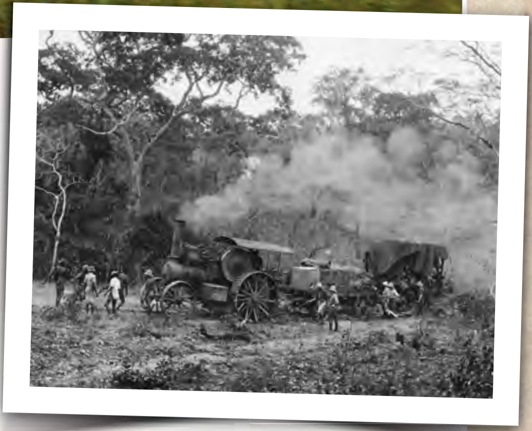
THE BATTLE ON THE LAKE

9 FEBRUARY 1916

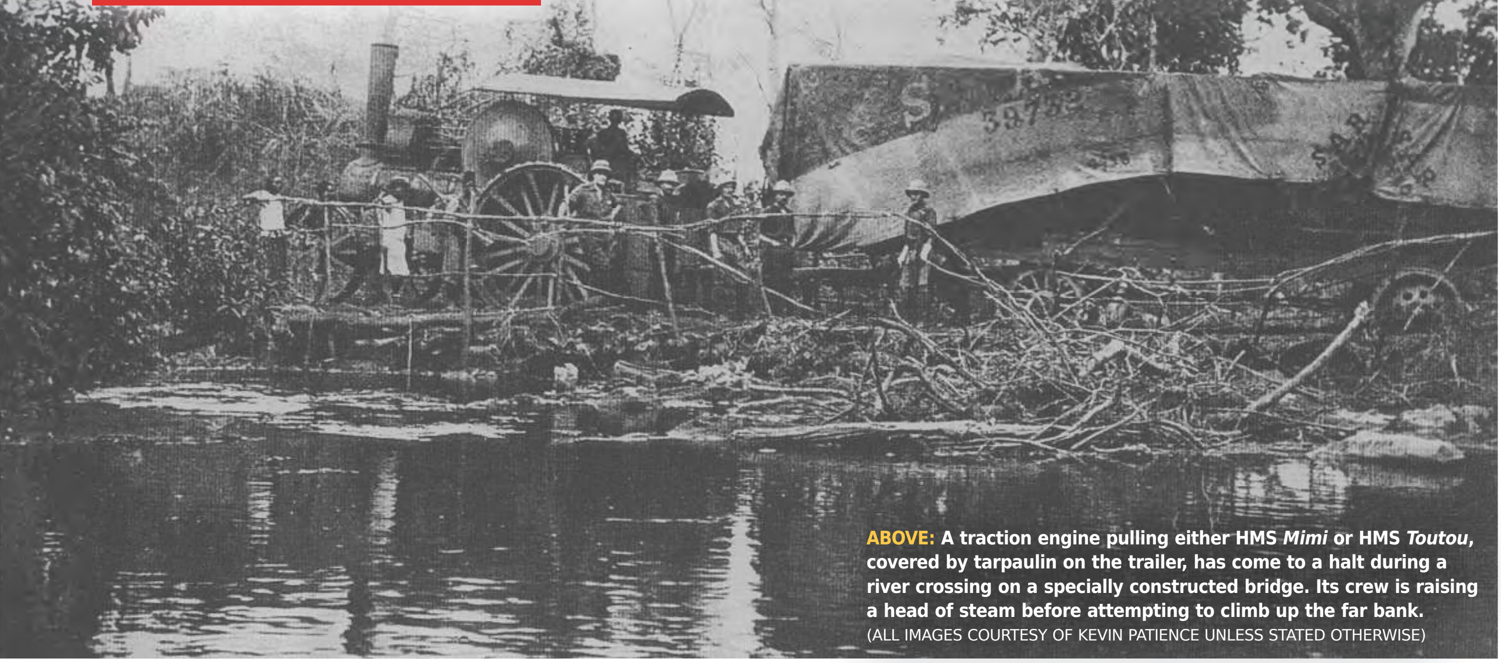
ON THE outbreak of the First World War, writes Kevin Patience, the colony of German East Africa (now Tanzania) went on an immediate war footing with the destruction of the British and Belgian ships on Lake Tanganyika. Here the Germans had complete supremacy courtesy of the availability of three armed vessels: *Kingani* (45 tons), *Hedwig von Wissman* (60 tons) and *Graf von Götzen* (1,000 tons). All three had been built in Germany and brought in sections to Dar es Salaam, the capital, and transported by railway to the lakeside port of Kigoma where they had been assembled and launched on the water.

It was not until 1915 that Britain was in a position to challenge the German control of Lake Tanganyika, and this came about through a suggestion by John Lee, an experienced Africa hand and big game hunter. At a meeting at the Admiralty, Lee was ushered in to see the First Sea Lord, Sir Henry Jackson. Lee's theory was that a lightly armed fast vessel would be able to damage the enemy sufficiently to disable them without incurring serious damage to itself. Sir Henry listened impassively and the following day declared: 'It is both the duty and the tradition of the Royal Navy to engage the enemy wherever there is water to float a ship. The African lakes are to be considered outlying seas and within the sphere of British naval power.'

BELOW: A view of Lake Tanganyika, on the waters of which HMS *Mimi* or HMS *Toutou* saw action during what is referred to as the Battle of Lake Tanganyika. It is estimated that Lake Tanganyika is the second largest freshwater lake in the world by volume, holding 18% of the world's freshwater, the second deepest and the world's longest. (COURTESY OF DAVE PROFFER)



ABOVE: One of the traction engines used during the expedition struggles to pull one of the Thorneycroft motor boats up a slope during the journey to the shores of Lake Tanganyika.



ABOVE: A traction engine pulling either HMS *Mimi* or HMS *Toutou*, covered by tarpaulin on the trailer, has come to a halt during a river crossing on a specially constructed bridge. Its crew is raising a head of steam before attempting to climb up the far bank. (ALL IMAGES COURTESY OF KEVIN PATIENCE UNLESS STATED OTHERWISE)

The distances involved in mounting such an operation were staggering. From London to Cape Town by ship was 6,100 miles; the rail journey from Cape Town to Fungurume by rail a further 2,700 miles. From Fungurume to Sankisia by traction engine was 120 miles, after which, another journey from Sankisia to Bukama added fifteen miles. The next part of the route, Bukama to Kabalo by river, was 200 miles, whilst the last stage, Kabalo to Lukuga by rail, was 175 miles – a total of 9,310 miles.

On 18 June 1915, the two boats and supplies together with a party of four officers and twenty-four seamen under the command of Lieutenant-Commander Geoffrey Spicer-Simson set off from London, arriving at Cape Town on 2 July. It was from there the small force set out for its destination.

'Escorted by an armed guard of native troops, we set off into the Bush, and it was not long before we met with trouble,' recalled one of the party, Warrant Officer Frank Magee. 'Some of the smaller bridges could not take the weight of the tractions and boats, and breakdowns became frequent ... Bush fires were always a source of danger, and often all available hands were called on to beat out the advancing flames, with broken off tree branches, to keep them from reaching our precious boats.'

Large parts of the journey presented extreme challenges. 'We were hacking a path through dense tropical forests, and working with an energy that was almost desperation as the rainy season was nearly due,' continued Magee, 'and we knew that if we could not accomplish this stage of our journey before it arrived we might have to abandon the whole project.

'Slowly we toiled onward and upward, there still being a plateau some 6,000 feet above sea level to be crossed. At this stage the gradient was so steep that both engines and two teams of trek oxen, as well as block and tackle fastened to trees, were necessary to haul one boat up.

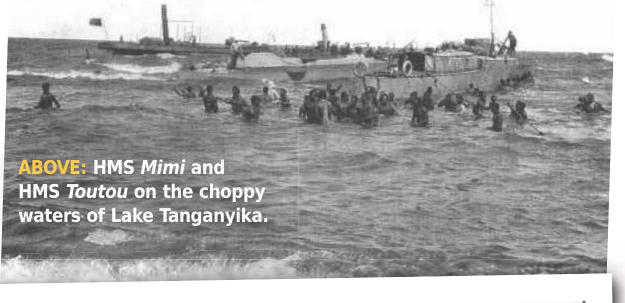
'It was grueling work, and I have to only shut my eyes to see again the shimmering African heat, the straining oxen and slowly moving wheels, and to hear again the crack of whips and shouts of perspiring men. We worked like demons during the day, and in the nights, those oppressive nights in which the darkness is almost tangible, our sleep was broken by the roar of lions who resented our presence but feared our fires.'

The party eventually reached its final destination in December. It had taken four and a half months for the two boats, named *Toutou* and *Mimi*, to reach their destination. Preparing a slipway and breakwater took a further month before *Toutou* was launched on 22 December, *Mimi* followed next morning. Once the sea trials had been completed, both vessels were ready for action.

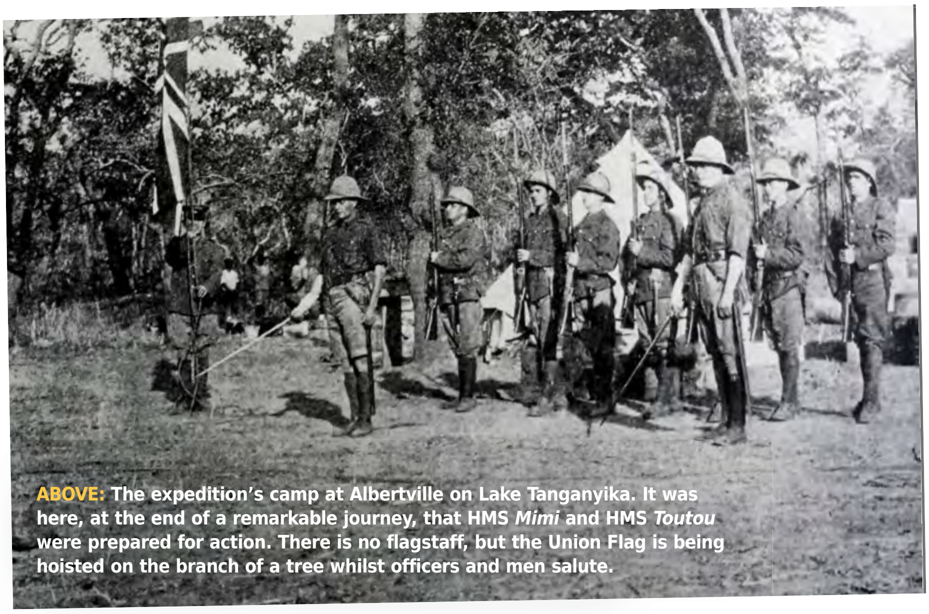
On Boxing Day, the two craft, which were each fitted with a 3-pounder Hotchkiss gun on the foredeck and a Maxim machine-gun in the stern, pounced on *Kingani* which was forced to surrender after the Captain, Chief Engineer and two members of the German crew were killed. The captured boat was re-named *Fifi*.

The loss of *Kingani* worried the Germans but bad weather and storms prevented them from investigating its fate until 9 February when *Wissman* appeared. *Toutou* was under repair so *Mimi* and *Fifi* set off in pursuit. A three hour duel ensued with *Mimi* harassing the larger and better armed *Wissman* until *Fifi* could catch up. A lucky shot from *Fifi*'s heavier gun hit the engine room. This forced the vessel to stop and it began to settle by the head. The crew abandoned ship and it sank ten minutes later.

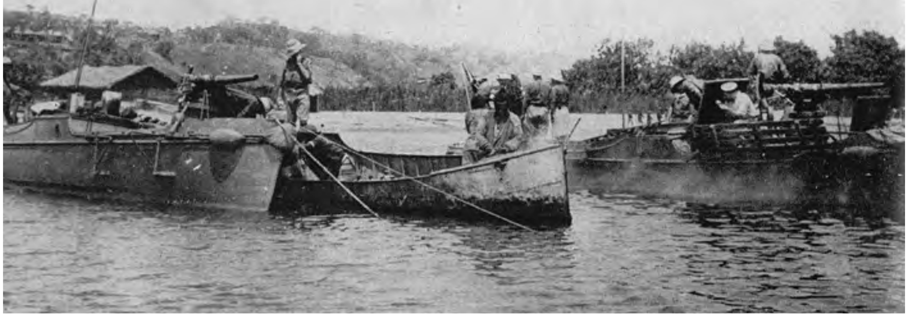
There was no great final duel with *Graf von Götzen*. Belgian forces pushed towards the lake and the commander of the flotilla, Captain Gustav Zimmer, was ordered to abandon Kigoma. *Graf von Götzen* was scuttled on 16 July 1916, leaving the masts protruding above the surface. Control of Lake Tanganyika was now in Belgian and British hands and remained so for the rest of the war.



ABOVE: HMS *Mimi* and HMS *Toutou* on the choppy waters of Lake Tanganyika.



ABOVE: The expedition's camp at Albertville on Lake Tanganyika. It was here, at the end of a remarkable journey, that HMS *Mimi* and HMS *Toutou* were prepared for action. There is no flagstaff, but the Union Flag is being hoisted on the branch of a tree whilst officers and men salute.

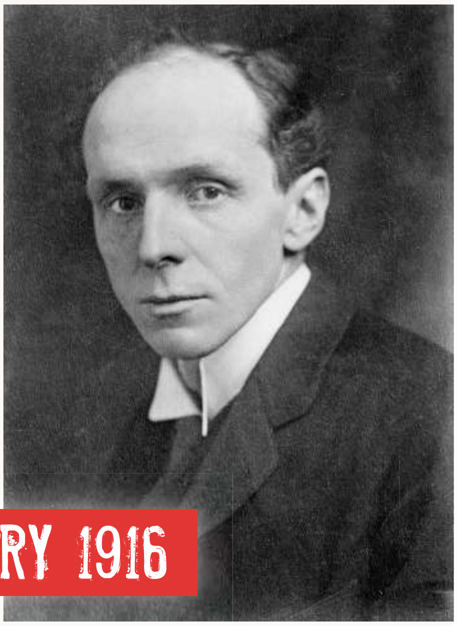


BELOW: HMS *Mimi* and HMS *Toutou* pictured side by side on Lake Tanganyika. Note the armament fitted to both vessels. The boats had been tested on the Thames on 8 June 1915, where arrangements had been made for *Mimi* to fire a practice shell from her 3-pounder. The shell hit the target, but both gun and gunner were catapulted into the river, as the gun had not been properly bolted to the deck.

The story of the naval expedition became public knowledge when it appeared on the front page of the *Daily Mirror* on 22 May 1916. Somewhat later, the *National Geographic* featured an article by Frank Magee, detailing the engagement, in its October 1922 edition.

A contemporary writer noted that 'no single achievement during World War I was distinguished by more bizarre features than the successfully executed undertaking of twenty-eight daring men who transported a "ready-made" navy overland through the wilds of Africa to destroy an enemy flotilla on Lake Tanganyika'. ●

MINISTRY OF BLOCKADE FORMED



23 FEBRUARY 1916

IN AN effort to coordinate the activities of various departments, the government created the Ministry of Blockade on 23 February 1916. The step was taken partly in response to vociferous criticism in some quarters of the progress and effectiveness of some of the measures then being taken in the war against Germany.

The first Minister of Blockade was Lord Robert Cecil. Already an Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, a position that he retained, Cecil worked under the auspices of the Foreign Office; indeed, the contraband department of the Foreign Office formed his staff.

As Minister of Blockade Cecil received a seat in the cabinet. He became the responsible head of all those departments and committees – the war trade advisory committee, the war trade department, the blockade, contraband, licensing, and enemy exports committees and so on – which, whether within or without the Foreign Office, were directly concerned with the restriction of supplies reaching the enemy. Commander the Rt. Hon. F. Leverton Harris, RNVR, MP, became his parliamentary secretary, and he had the assistance of Vice Admiral Sir D. de Chair, KCB, MVO, as naval adviser.

A further step taken at this point involved the Intelligence Branch of the War Trade Department. Established on 1 February 1915, under the title of the 'Trade Clearing House', this body collated all intelligence on war trade available in the various Government departments. Following the establishment of the new Ministry, the Clearing House became its new intelligence department, being renamed the War Trade Intelligence Department, which title it retained until it was disbanded on 31 October 1919. The new Ministry also included a Foreign Trade Department, this being responsible for drawing up lists of firms known to be or suspected of trading with the enemy, a Financial Transactions Department, and the Enemy Exports Committee.

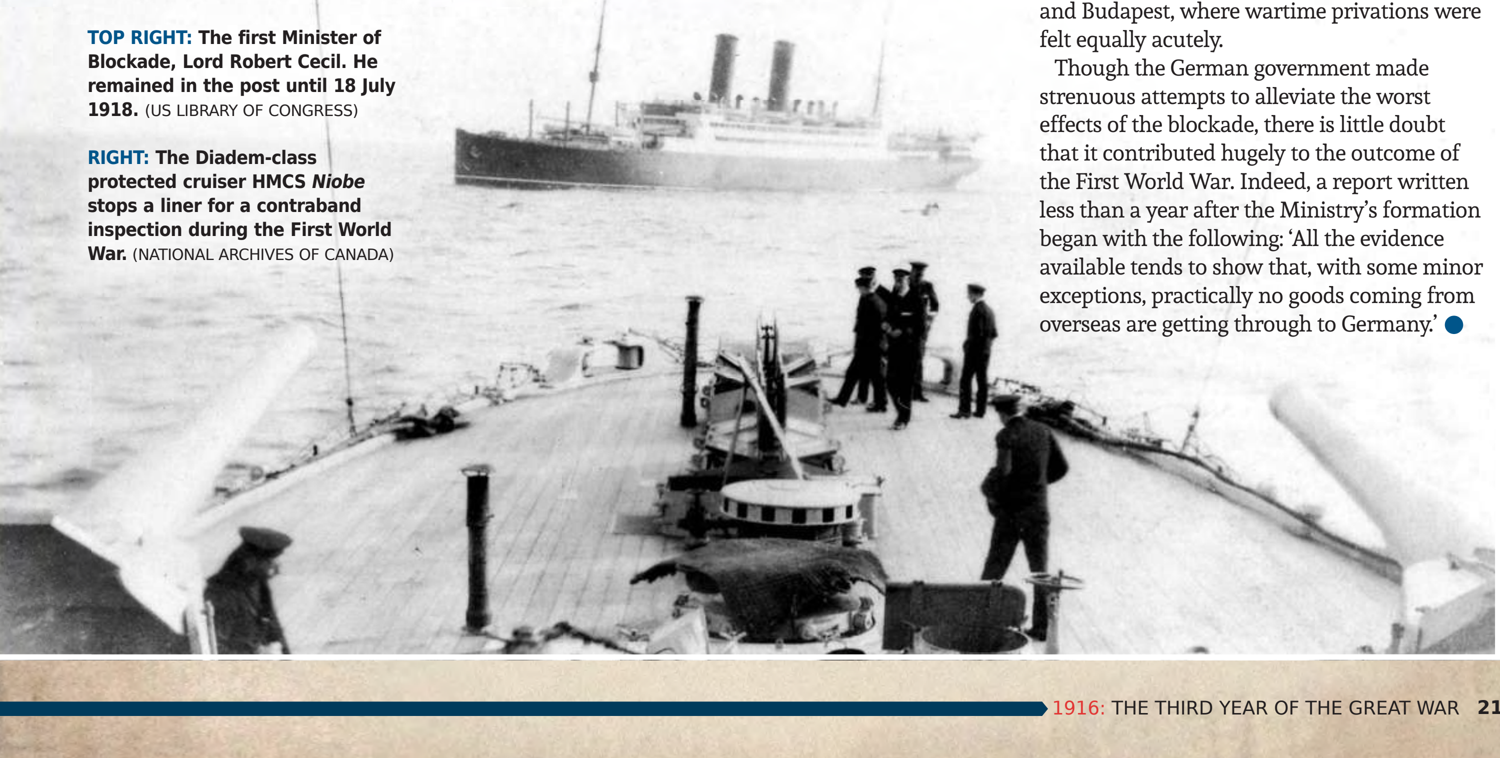
Though the term 'blockade' was technically incorrect, for no general blockade, in the strict legal sense, had been declared, it did reinforce the new Ministry's role to co-ordinate and tighten up the whole machinery by which economic pressure was brought to bear on the Central Powers. It soon started to have effect.

Already by the end of 1915, German imports had fallen by 55% from pre-war levels – a trend which only increased after the formation of the Ministry. Aside from causing shortages in important raw materials such as coal and various non-ferrous metals, the blockade cut off fertiliser supplies that were vital to German agriculture.

Staple foodstuffs such as grain, potatoes, meat and dairy products became so scarce by the winter of 1916 that many people subsisted on a diet of ersatz products that ranged from *Kriegsbrot* (literally 'war bread') to powdered milk. The shortages caused looting and food riots, not only in Germany, but also in Vienna and Budapest, where wartime privations were felt equally acutely.

Though the German government made strenuous attempts to alleviate the worst effects of the blockade, there is little doubt that it contributed hugely to the outcome of the First World War. Indeed, a report written less than a year after the Ministry's formation began with the following: 'All the evidence available tends to show that, with some minor exceptions, practically no goods coming from overseas are getting through to Germany.' ●

TOP RIGHT: The first Minister of Blockade, Lord Robert Cecil. He remained in the post until 18 July 1918. (US LIBRARY OF CONGRESS)



RIGHT: The Diadem-class protected cruiser HMCS *Niobe* stops a liner for a contraband inspection during the First World War. (NATIONAL ARCHIVES OF CANADA)

SS SUSSEX ATTACKED

24 MARCH 1916

THE LONDON, Brighton & South Coast Railway-managed ferry SS *Sussex* had left Folkestone at 13.25 hours on the afternoon of 24 March 1916. Bound for Dieppe, she was carrying 380 passengers and mail for the British forces fighting in France.

The steamer proceeded on its course almost due south after passing Dungeness. The weather was clear and the sea smooth recalled one of the passengers, Edna Hales. Then, at about 14.50 hours, when the 1,353-ton twin-screw ferry was some thirteen miles south of the Kent coast, her French skipper, Captain Mouffet, spotted a white streak some fifty yards off from his vessel's port side whilst he was standing on the bridge. He quickly realised that the streak, the wake of what was clearly a torpedo, was racing straight towards *Sussex*.

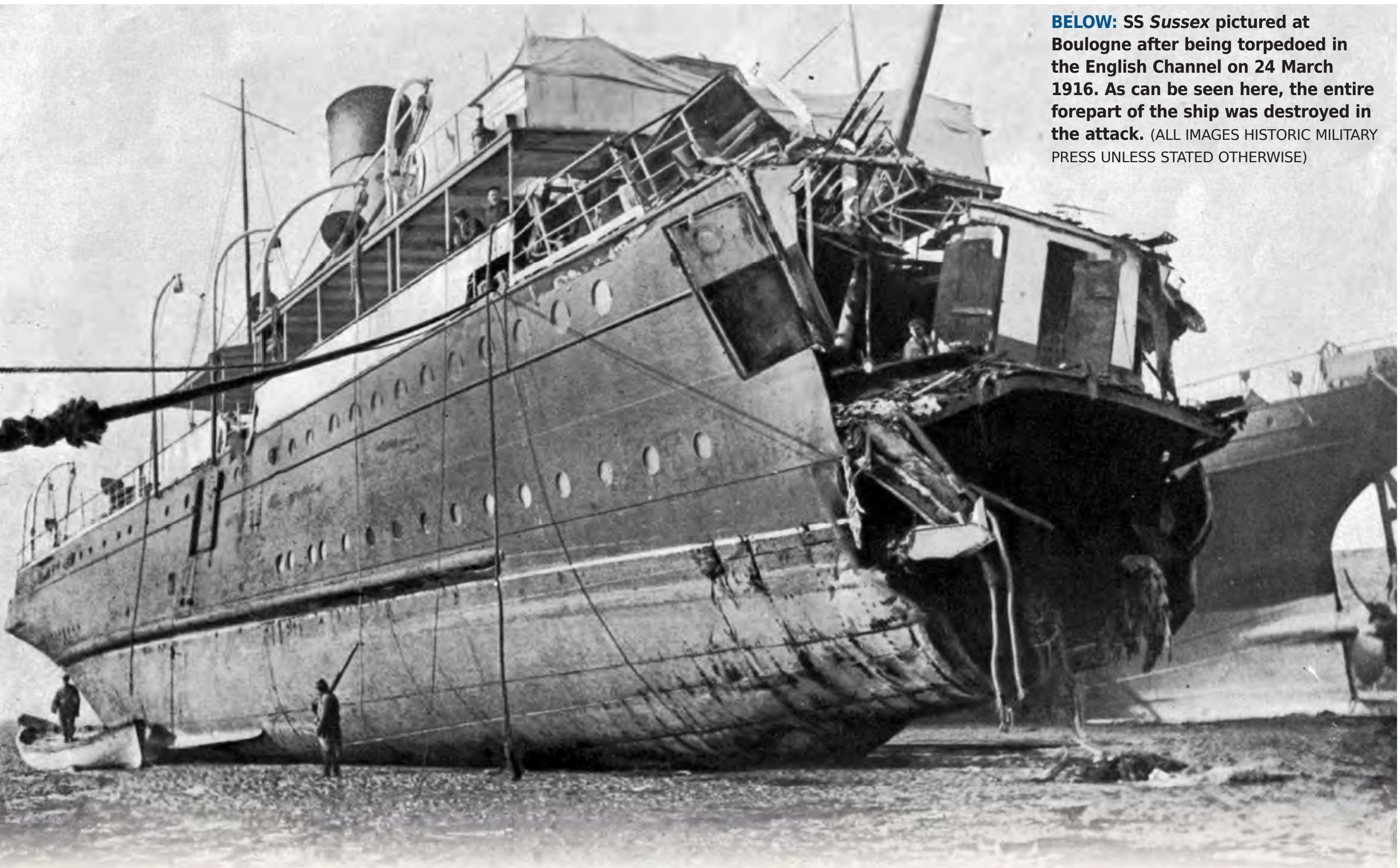
The torpedo was also seen very clearly by the first officer and the boatswain. Wasting no time, Mouffet ordered the steamer to make an immediate turn to port, at the same instructing that the starboard engine to be stopped – 'the purpose being to swing the vessel to starboard so as to dodge the torpedo by allowing it to pass along the port bow on a line converging with the altered course of the steamer'. However, before *Sussex* could be turned far enough to avoid crossing the course of the torpedo, the latter struck the hull at an angle a short distance forward of the bridge.

Another of those who also saw the torpedo was an American citizen named Henry S. Beer. Leaning on the port rail about ten feet behind the bridge, Beer was gazing seaward when he saw the approaching wake about 100 yards away. The sight led him to exclaim to his wife and companion: 'A torpedo!' Immediately following his exclamation the missile struck the vessel. The resulting explosion was devastating.

'There was a terrible shock, then an explosion', said Professor James Mark Baldwin, who was travelling with his family back to their home in Pennsylvania, in an interview for a French newspaper. 'We were both knocked down. I was uninjured but my wife was severely bruised. We thought of nothing for the moment but our daughter. We rushed forward, as least as far as we could get – for the *Sussex* had been cut clean off, just beyond the bridge.'

The torpedo, fired from the Type UB II submarine *UB-29*, commanded by *Oberleutnant zur See* Herbert Pustkuchen, had indeed blown the forepart of the ferry clean away as far back as the water-tight saloon bulkhead. A number of passengers and crew were killed outright, others mortally wounded. Captain Mouffet himself was injured in the head and leg. Pandemonium broke out and there was an immediate rush to the lifeboats even though there was no order from Mouffet to abandon ship. Some, in complete panic, threw themselves into the sea. In the chaos, one of the lifeboats, released into the water by untrained passengers, capsized as it was lowered into the water; another lifeboat, hopelessly overcrowded, also capsized.

BELOW & ABOVE RIGHT: Passengers gather on the deck of the SS *Sussex* in the aftermath of the torpedo's explosion.



BELOW: **SS *Sussex* pictured at Boulogne after being torpedoed in the English Channel on 24 March 1916. As can be seen here, the entire forepart of the ship was destroyed in the attack.** (ALL IMAGES HISTORIC MILITARY PRESS UNLESS STATED OTHERWISE)

In the explosion the ferry's foremast had been knocked over bringing the wireless aerials down with it. It took about an hour to rig up temporary aerials and send out distress signals. To make matters worse, an incorrect position was transmitted and though ships and boats set off to help rescue the survivors, from both British and French ports, nothing was seen of *Sussex* at the given coordinates.

It was not until 23.00 hours that the first rescue vessel found the stricken ferry – almost eight hours after the first distress call had been sent. Survivors were landed on both sides of the Channel and no accurate details were taken of those people, many of whom simply carried on with their journeys.

The news of the attack upon *Sussex* soon travelled around the world and led to much anger being vented upon the Germans. Whilst there were people from many different countries on board the ferry, it was the Americans who reacted the most vociferously; even though no US citizens had been killed, four were seriously injured. This was followed by the sinking of the SS *Englishman* (a passenger ship on its way from Avonmouth to Portland, Maine) also on 24 March in which four US citizens died.

The German Foreign Office in Berlin protested its country's innocence, claiming that *Sussex* had struck a British mine. This was vehemently rejected by the US press, using such words as 'lawless undersea operations' and 'submarine atrocities'.

In the face of mounting pressure, President Wilson finally wrote to the German Government. Whilst referring specifically to the *Sussex* in the 'Note', the US President also mentioned 'the deliberate method and spirit with which merchantmen of every kind, nationality and designation are indiscriminately destroyed'. Wilson went on to declare that: 'If the Imperial German Government should not now, without delay, proclaim and make effective renunciation of its present methods of submarine warfare against passenger and cargo ships, the United States Government can have no other choice than to break off completely diplomatic relations with the German Government.'

ENRIQUE GRANADOS

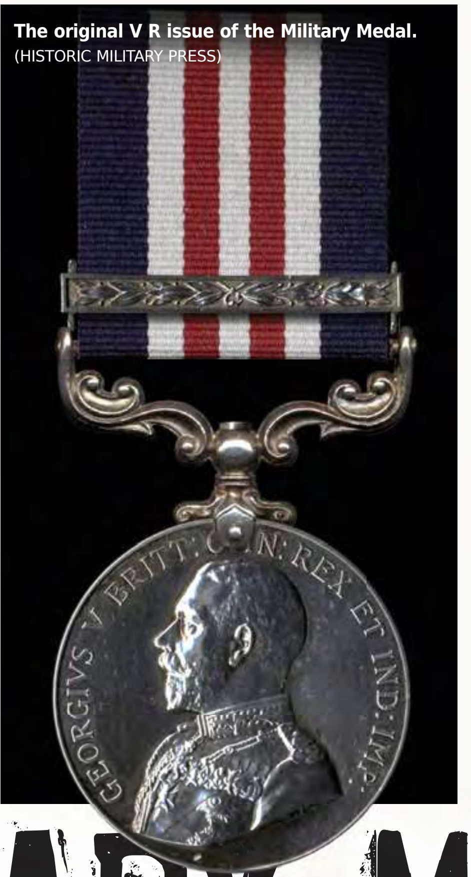
The exact number of passengers and crew killed in the attack on the SS *Sussex* has never been fully established – the most commonly stated figures vary between fifty and eighty. The dead including the celebrated Spanish composer Enrique Granados and his wife Amparo. Forty-eight-year-old Granados was killed in a failed attempt to save his wife whom he saw flailing about in the water some distance away – he jumped out of his lifeboat to try and reach her but drowned in the attempt. Ironically, Granados' cabin was in the half of the ferry that did not sink and was eventually towed to Boulogne. His body was never recovered.
(US LIBRARY OF CONGRESS)

This did the trick. The Germans responded almost immediately by acknowledging that following further investigations it had been concluded that *Sussex* had indeed been sunk by a German submarine and that the guilty captain had been 'punished'. They even declared that they would compensate Americans injured by the explosion of the torpedo.

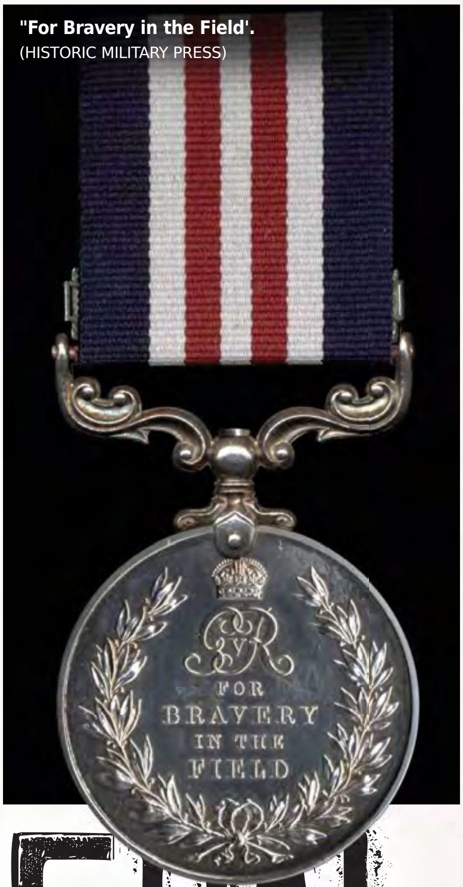
More importantly, in time the German Government also made a pledge to cease its policy of unrestricted submarine warfare. The primary elements of this undertaking were that passenger ships would not be targeted, merchant ships would not be sunk until the presence of weapons had been established, if necessary by a search of the ship, and that merchant ships would not be sunk without provision for the safety of passengers and crew. This became known as The Sussex Pledge and for now at least, it kept the US out of the war. ●

MILITARY MEDAL INSTITUTED

25 MARCH 1916



The original V R issue of the Military Medal. (HISTORIC MILITARY PRESS)



"For Bravery in the Field'. (HISTORIC MILITARY PRESS)

ON WEDNESDAY, 5 April 1916, *The London Gazette* carried news of the institution of a new gallantry decoration – the Military Medal. The Royal Warrant, signed by Kitchener on 25 March 1916, stated: 'Whereas We are desirous of signifying Our appreciation of acts of gallantry and devotion to duty performed by non-commissioned officers and men of Our Army in the Field We do by these Presents for Us Our heirs and successors institute and create a silver medal to be awarded to non-commissioned officers and men for individual or associated acts of bravery on the recommendation of a Commander-in-Chief in the Field.'

The first awards of the Military Medal were gazetted on the same date. By the end of the First World War a total of 115,000 awards had been made, including a number to Royal Navy and RAF personnel. In addition, 5,796 first Bars, 180 second Bars, and a single third Bar were presented. The latter individual is Corporal Ernest Albert Corey. Born on 20 December 1891, at Green Hills near Cooma, New South Wales, Corey abandoned his job as a blacksmith's striker to enlist in the Australian Imperial Force on 13 January 1916. Allotted to the 55th Battalion, he joined his unit in France on 8 February 1917, where he was initially posted to a grenade section before volunteering for stretcher-bearing duties. The first of Corey's Military Medals was awarded for his actions at Quéant, near Bullecourt, in May 1917. He earned the first Bar to the MM at Polygon Wood in September 1917, the second Bar at Péronne in September 1918 and the third Bar at the Hindenburg Line near Bellicourt on 30 September 1918. On all four occasions it was for rescuing wounded men. His medals are on display in the Hall of Valour in the Australian War Memorial at Canberra.

In June 1916, eligibility for the Military Medal was extended to women. Lady Dorothie Mary Evelyn Feilding-Moore, a British heiress who volunteered to serve as a nurse and ambulance driver, was the first woman to be decorated with the MM. Indeed, the award of the medal to women was most commonly made to nurses, auxiliaries and ambulance drivers serving in the various aid organisations immediately in the rear of the front lines in France and Flanders and in Italy during the First World War. Two of the earliest awards of the MM were made to female civilians for their conduct during the Easter Rising in Dublin in 1916 (see page 34).

Among the other more notable recipients of the Military Medal are the following: Douglas Clark (British rugby league footballer and wrestler who served on the Western Front in 1917); Fred "Buck" Kite (the only British soldier to be awarded the MM and two Bars in the Second World War – served in the 3rd Royal Tank Regiment); Karl Vernon (Olympic medalist oarsman and coach who served in the RAMC in the First World War); Arthur Wesley Wheen (awarded the MM and two Bars and who would later go on to translate Erich Maria Remarque's *All Quiet on the Western Front*); Lance Corporal William Coltman (the most highly decorated NCO of the First World War); and Norman Washington Manley (one time First Minister of Jamaica who served as a Sergeant in the Royal Field Artillery during the First World War).

The Military Medal, which has the post-nominal letters MM, was discontinued in 1993. ●

ABOVE: Two volunteer nurses and ambulances drivers, Elsie Knocker (on the left) and Mairi Chisholm, pictured in their Motor Ambulance at Pervyse, north of Ypres in Belgium, during the First World War. Dubbed 'The Madonnas of Pervyse' by the press, and honoured with numerous awards and decorations, the pair were amongst the most photographed women of the war. Both Knocker and Chisholm were awarded the Military Medal. (US LIBRARY OF CONGRESS)

'STRAIGHTENING OUT THE LINE'

27 MARCH 1916

WINTER WAS not the time to mount a major offensive and the armies facing each other across No Man's Land on the Western Front were more intent on strengthening their defences and preparing for the onslaught that the better weather would herald. Persistent attacks, however, even if on a relatively small scale, kept the troops on the alert.

This was particularly the case at St. Eloi some three miles south of Ypres, where a small German salient, 600 yards in width, encroached 100 yards into the British line. This enemy salient was on slightly higher ground and included an artificial earth bank called 'The Mound' – which gave the Germans excellent observation over British trenches and roads. Here subterranean warfare had been almost non-stop during 1915 and had continued into the following year. Both sides had been actively engaged in these underground struggles and in all some thirty-three surface mines had been exploded within this small area, of which the Germans had fired the majority.

ABOVE: A witness to the fighting on 27 March 1916, Lieutenant Geoffrey Malins is pictured here with spare tins of film hanging around his waist.

Towards the end of March 1916 Field Marshal Haig decided to remove the threat of this salient once and for all. In Haig's words, the objective was to be that of 'straightening out the line'. The date for the attack, which came to be referred to as the Battle of the St. Eloi Craters or the Action at St. Eloi, was set for 27 March.

The battle opened with the firing of six very large mines, all of which were detonated simultaneously. The blowing of the mines was accompanied by an artillery barrage. 'The rumble [from the detonation of the mines] had barely subsided, when it seemed as if all the guns in France had opened rapid battery fire at the same moment,' described one witness, the official cinematographer, Geoffrey H. Malins. 'Shells poured over our heads towards the German positions in hundreds. The shrieking and ear-splitting explosives were terrific, from the sharp bark of the 4.2 to the heavy rumble and rush of the 9-inch 'How' [Howitzer]. The Germans, surprised in their sleep, seemed absolutely demoralised. They were blazing away in all directions, firing in the most wild and extraordinary manner, anywhere and everywhere. Shells were crashing and smashing their way into the remains of the outbuildings, and they were literally exploding all round.'

Thirty seconds after the artillery had begun its bombardment, the infantry launched its assault. The attack upon the German salient was undertaken by the 3rd Division's 9th Brigade, with the 1st Battalion Northumberland Fusiliers and 4th Battalion Royal Fusiliers forming the first assault wave. ▷▷

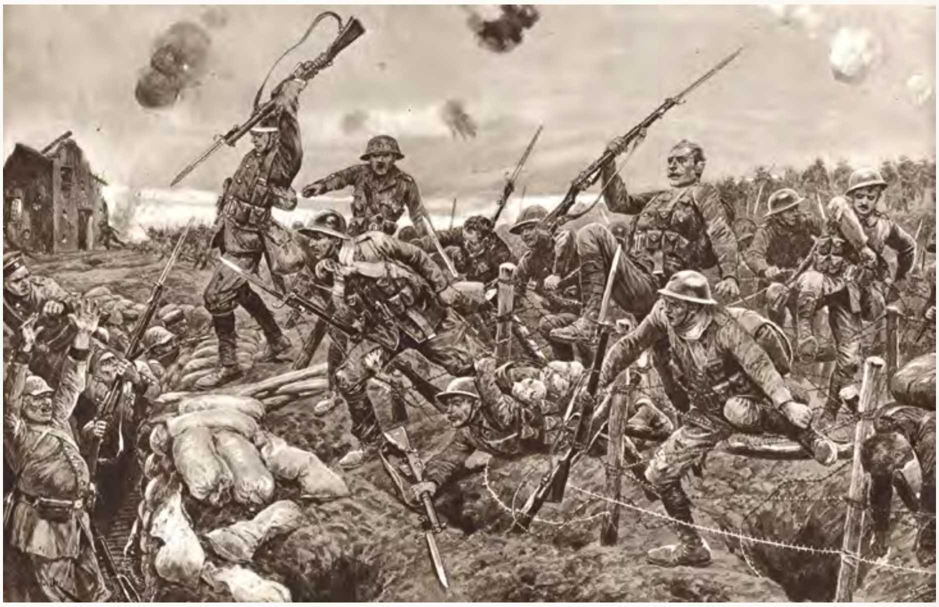
ABOVE: Men of the 1st Battalion, Northumberland Fusiliers pictured after the fighting at St Eloi on 27 March 1916.

(ALL IMAGES HISTORIC MILITARY PRESS UNLESS STATED OTHERWISE)

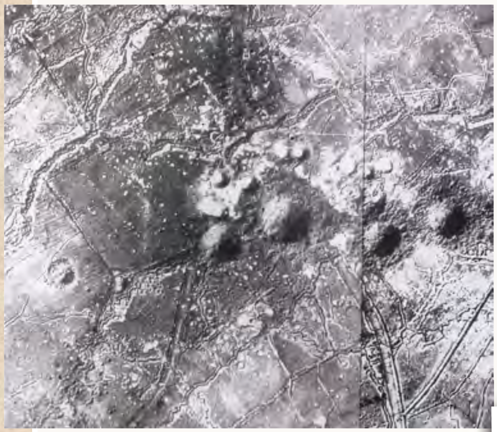
On the right the 1st Northumberland Fusiliers reached the German wire with the loss of only a single soldier; the 4th Royal Fusiliers were, however, hit by machine-gun fire as they went over the top. German artillery responded very quickly and less than a minute after the last of the Northumberlands had 'gone over the top', shellfire began to fall on the British trenches, No Man's Land and the new craters.

'The Germans suddenly started throwing 'Minnies' over,' continued Malins, 'so revolving my camera, I filmed them bursting over our men. The casualties were very slight. For fully an hour I stood there filming this wonderful scene, and throughout all the inferno, neither I nor my machine was touched. A fragment of shrapnel touched my tripod, taking a small piece out of the leg. That was all!' The footage Malins took that day was the first film taken of a British attack.

The Royal Fusiliers continued to struggle forward but they quickly became disorientated as the ground, blown apart by the massive mines, was now completely different. Visibility was also severely limited and the Fusiliers could not tell whether they were in a mine crater, or shell hole, or an old German trench.



ABOVE: **A stylised artist's depiction of the attack at St. Eloi on the morning of 27 March 1916. The original caption states that the men seen here are from the 1st Battalion, Northumberland Fusiliers.**



ABOVE: **An aerial photograph of the area around St. Eloi which was taken by a Royal Flying Corps reconnaissance flight from an altitude of 6,500 feet at 09.00 hours on 27 March 1916.**

Although it was reported that the objective had been captured, they had in fact not advanced to the main line of new craters, but only just beyond the shorter distance to the left-hand mine. Crucially, one of the craters (caused by Mine No.5) was still held by the Germans, although the Mound itself had disappeared, destroyed in the blast.

Following behind the two lead battalions were the other two battalions of the 9th Brigade – the 1st Battalion Royal Scots Fusiliers and 12th Battalion West Yorkshire Regiment. As these moved forward along the communication trenches to support the first wave and consolidate the ground won, they also began to take casualties from the German shellfire. To make matters worse, it began to rain heavily.

By the end of the day, the 9th Brigade's new front consisted of a series of isolated positions, not a connected line of trenches. The problems that were now to be faced were those of holding these posts and of taking the final parts of the German salient.

After suffering losses of around 1,000 men the 9th Brigade was relieved by battalions from the 8th and 76th Brigades. It was the men of the 8th Battalion, The King's Own (Royal Lancaster Regiment), of the latter brigade, who were given the task of ejecting the Germans from the one part of the salient they still held, the No.5 Crater.

The King's Own attacked the crater on 3 April 1916, after a one-hour-long bombardment. Joining the attack was Captain William 'Billy' La Touche Congreve. He later recalled this incident as he reached the German-held crater: 'Imagine my surprise and horror when I saw a whole crowd of armed Boches! I stood there for a moment feeling a bit sort of shy, and then I levelled my revolver at the nearest Boche and shouted "Hands up, all the lot of you!" A few went up at once, then a few more and then the lot; and I felt the proudest fellow in the world as I cursed them.' Congreve actually captured five German officers and seventy-seven men. For his actions, he was awarded the DSO.

The Germans mounted a counter-attack on 6 April in a bid to recover this important ground. By this time the St. Eloi position was occupied by the 2nd Canadian Division. They held onto the craters. The line had been straightened, as Haig had wished, and the corresponding threat to the British line had been removed. ●

ABOVE: **German soldiers pictured in one of the craters formed by the mine explosions at St. Eloi on 27 March 1916. Haig himself later noted: "The operation was begun by the firing of six very large mines; the charge was so heavy that the explosion was felt in towns several miles behind the lines, and large numbers of the enemy were killed. Half a minute after the explosion our infantry attack was launched aiming at the German Second Line."** (COURTESY OF WALTER LEHMANN; EUROPEANA 1914-1918)

THE UPLEES DISASTER

2 APRIL 1916

FAVERSHAM IN Kent lays claim to being the birthplace of the UKs explosive's industry, with its origins dating back to the sixteenth century. In those early times it was gunpowder that was produced for the artillery, but in 1847 this was replaced by the significantly more powerful gun cotton. Unfortunately techniques for the safe handling of gun cotton were in their infancy and on 14 July that year a serious explosion killed eighteen employees at the Marsh Works, only ten of whose bodies could be identified.

The factory was closed down following this disaster and gun cotton was not manufactured again in Faversham until 1873 when the Cotton Powder Company opened up a new plant in the marshes at Uplees, some two and a half miles from the town centre. In 1913 the parent company built a second factory close by, the Explosives Loading Company, which filled bombs, shells, and detonators with explosives. At the outbreak of war in 1914 both factories were requisitioned by the Admiralty, and soldiers took over the security of the whole site.

By 1916, following the 'Shell Scandal' of the previous year, both factories were working at full capacity and on 31 March 1916 an inspection by Major Aston Cooper-Key, His Majesty's Inspector of Explosives, noted the Explosives Loading Company was in 'a very congested state', owing to the Ministry of Munitions having sent supplies 'much in excess of the requirements of the works'. Of particular concern to the Inspector was that when the magazines holding the stocks of TNT and ammonium nitrate, which were combined in the factory to produce amatol, for use in shells and bombs, were full, the substances were simply left in the open and covered with tarpaulins. Nevertheless, Major Cooper-Key was in general satisfied with what he saw. Yet, just two days later, the worst munitions disaster in British history was to devastate the plant.

On Sunday, 2 April, work began as usual at 07.00 hours. As it was a Sunday, no women were working that day.

ABOVE: A memorial cross to some of those who lost their lives in the disaster. (COURTESY OF DAVID ANSTISS, WWW.GEOGRAPH.ORG.UK)

ABOVE: The mass grave of some of the men killed in the explosion at the gunpowder works in Uplees in 1916. (COURTESY OF PAM FRAY, WWW.GEOGRAPH.ORG.UK)

ABOVE: Evidence of the former munitions factory at Uplees can still be seen. (COURTESY OF CHRIS WHIPPET, WWW.GEOGRAPH.ORG.UK)

It was not until shortly after midday that the foreman of a local contractor noticed a fire and alerted the workers who were enjoying their lunch in the canteen. The fire reached a pile of empty TNT bags tucked against the north wall of building No.833; the latter was filled with 150 tonnes of high explosive.

At 12.30 hours the fire engine arrived, only to discover that the nearest hydrant was 700 yards away and the firemen had to wait for an additional hose. This delay proved, quite literally, fatal. Meanwhile efforts were made to remove as much of the explosive in the building, with men risking their lives..

At last the extra hose arrived, but just as the firemen began to pour water on the building, a tremendous explosion ripped it apart.

So great was the explosion that windows across the Thames estuary in Southend were shattered and the tremor was felt as far away as Norwich. The crater made by the explosion was forty yards across and twenty feet deep. A total of 115 men and boys were killed; seven of the bodies were never found. ●

2 APRIL 1916

SCOTLAND'S FIRST AIR RAID

SHORTLY AFTER midday on Sunday, 2 April 1916, four airships set out from their bases to conduct the first ever air raid on Scotland. They were to head for the Firth of Forth and, more specifically, the naval base at Rosyth, as well as the Forth Bridge.

Only two of the four airships, *L.14* and *L.22*, reached Scotland – *L.13* had been forced to abandon its mission due to engine problems, whilst heavy winds pushed *L.16* over Northumberland. Having initially dropped a number of bombs on open fields near Berwick-on-Tweed, *L.22* finally arrived over the Scottish capital just as *L.14* was beginning its attack. The crew of *L.22* dropped just three bombs, which did no more than break glass in Colinton and Liberton, before making off.

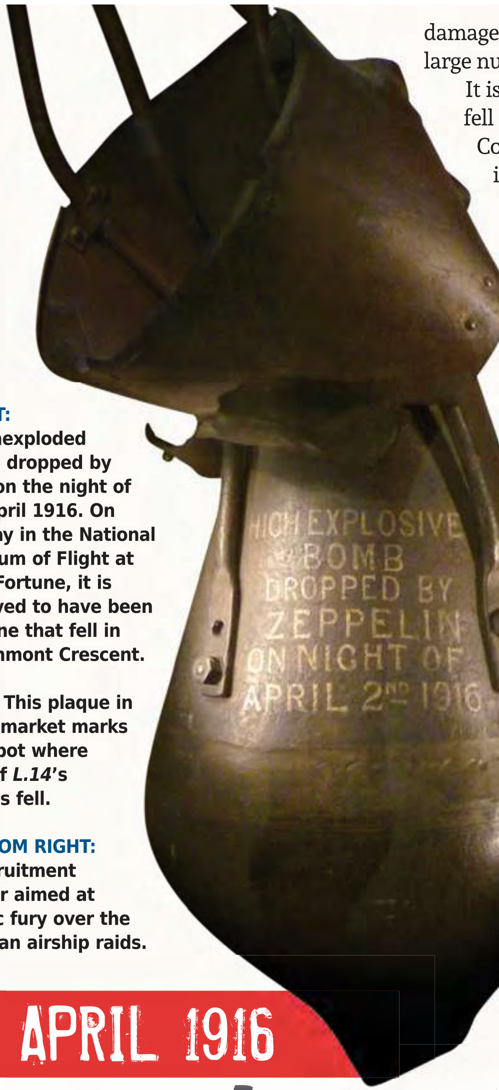
It was *L.14* under the command of *Kapitänleutnant* Böcker which caused the most damage, beginning at Leith, where his crew dropped nine high-explosive and eleven incendiary bombs. A man and a child were killed, three houses were wrecked or burnt and a number of business premises hit. It had been about 23.00 hours when Böcker had spotted a few lights at Leith and Edinburgh, enabling him to fix his position. As *L.14* steered towards them, however, they were gradually extinguished – at which point the airship was picked up by a searchlight. Undeterred, he had pressed on.

The Official History notes that one of the bombs dropped by *L.14*, a small incendiary, fell into a room of a house in Commercial Street, Leith, where an old lady was in bed: 'The bomb crashed through the floor into the room beneath where it burst into flames. The woman got out of bed and poured water through the hole until she had put out the fire below.'

From Leith, Böcker headed on to Edinburgh. There his crew dropped eighteen high-explosive and six incendiary bombs. 'Although many of these burst harmlessly,' continues the Official History, 'eleven people were killed and twenty-four injured; four houses, a spirit store, and three hotels were seriously damaged, and Princes Street Station and a large number of houses less seriously hit.'

It is recorded that a high-explosive bomb fell in the grounds of George Watson's College, along with an incendiary bomb in the Meadows. Other bombs hit Edinburgh Castle rock itself, and there is a plaque high up on the rock which commemorates the incident. Bombs also struck the Grassmarket, in front of the White Hart Hotel, and the County Hotel on Lothian Road. Six people taking refuge in the entrance of a 'working class tenement' in Marshall Street died when a bomb hit the pavement just outside, a police report stated. Meanwhile, a fire brigade account from the time describes a miraculous escape at a house in Marchmont Crescent: 'An explosive bomb struck the roof and penetrated to the ground floor, through the lobbies of each floor, wrecking the lobbies. This bomb failed to explode.'

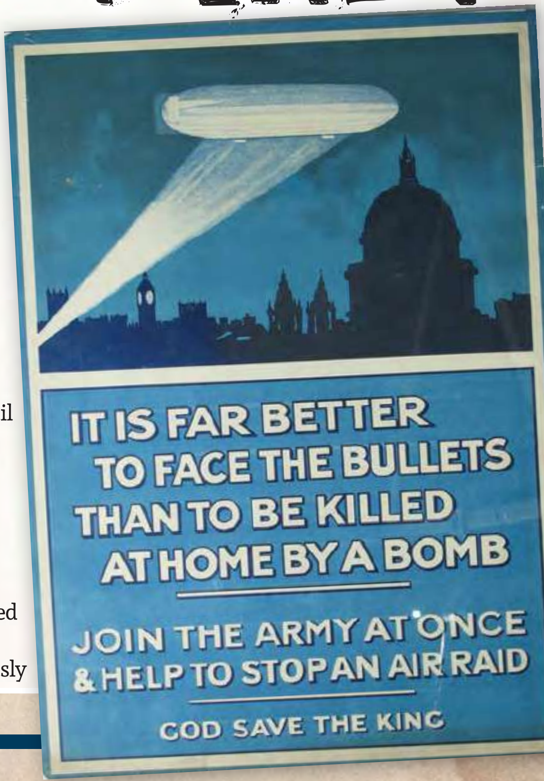
The last of *L.14*'s bombs were dropped at about 00.15 hours, after which the airship then made off at full speed. The only opposition she met with over land came from two machine-guns which fired a few rounds from the southern slope of Arthur's Seat. ●



RIGHT: An unexploded bomb dropped by *L.14* on the night of 2/3 April 1916. On display in the National Museum of Flight at East Fortune, it is believed to have been the one that fell in Marchmont Crescent.

This stone marks
the site
of a bomb
dropped from
Zeppelin
Airship L14
on the
night of
2nd April 1916

LEFT: This plaque in Grassmarket marks the spot where one of *L.14*'s bombs fell.



BOTTOM RIGHT: A recruitment poster aimed at public fury over the German airship raids.

ABOVE: **Eleven spies were executed at the Tower of London during the First World War – one in 1914, nine in 1915 and, Hurwitz-y-Zender, in 1916. Ten of this number were shot in the rifle range which stood at the base of the wall from which this picture was taken. A brass panel marks the execution of Ludovico Hurwitz-y-Zender at the Tower.** (ALL IMAGES COURTESY OF ROBERT MITCHELL)

ABOVE: **This display of three British Lee Enfield rifles at the Tower of London recalls the execution of twelve German spies at the Tower of London during the two world wars.**

GERMAN SPY EXECUTED

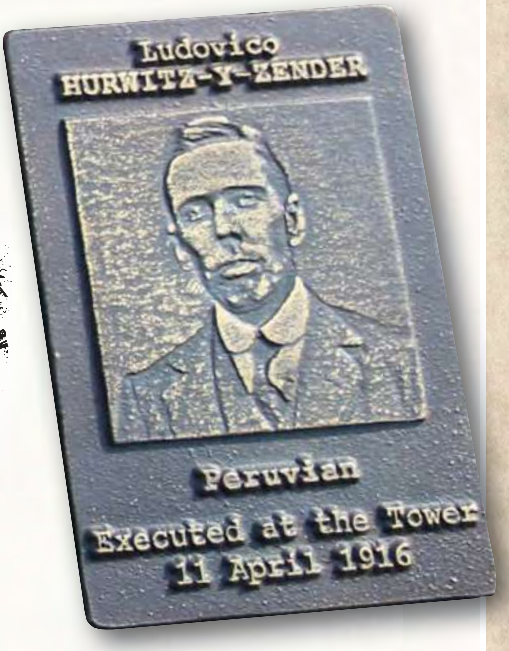
11 APRIL 1916

ON 15 May 1915 a person signing himself as Ludovico Hurwitz sent a telegram which read as follows: 'Buy immediately 180 cases 100/2 tins smoked herrings as guaranted [*sic*] good quality.' Similar telegrams over the course of the next ten days were sent by Hurwitz regarding sardines and anchovies – all of which were intercepted by the British authorities who regarded them as being fishy in more than one respect. The author of the telegrams, whose real name was Ludovico Hurwitz-y-Zender, had been born in Peru but his grandparents were Scandinavian and Ludovic could speak English and French.

In August 1914 he travelled to Europe, visiting, amongst other places, Copenhagen and Christiania, as Oslo was then called. It was believed that it was whilst he was in Christiania that he had been recruited by the Germans to act as a spy on their behalf. He also went to Scotland, as the address he gave when sending the telegrams was 59 Union Street, Glasgow.

The police were sent round to that address only to find that Hurwitz had travelled to Norway. On his return to the UK on 2 July 1915 he was promptly arrested. What then had Hurwitz done that aroused such suspicions? From their knowledge of codes, the British intelligence service believed that the messages related to the movements of elements of the Royal Navy's Grand Fleet. For example they saw 'Buy immediately' as 'the arrival', 'Ship' was 'departure' and 'Buy' as 'coaling'. The telegram of 15 May was read as meaning that eighteen large cruisers were coaling or about to depart from the Firth of Forth.

Upon investigation Hurwitz claimed that he was a business man who intended to trade in paper, handkerchiefs and various foods. It was also discovered that he had visited Berlin and had travelled considerably along the British North Sea coast – where the fleet was likely to be found. Though claiming to be a business man, he actually undertook no business at all during his time in the United Kingdom. The telegrams he had sent were all to an August Brochner who lived in Bergen, Norway. Brochner, it was found, was a German national who had no ostensible means of support but who was in daily communication with the German consulate.



Though there was no direct proof of clandestine operations, the activities of Hurwitz were unquestionably suspicious and he was eventually charged with treason. The general court martial was held at Caxton Hall, Westminster, during March 1916. Zender faced four charges. Though he pleaded not guilty, he was found guilty on all counts and was sentenced to death by shooting.

On the morning of 7 April he was taken from Wandsworth detention barracks to the Tower of London and informed of his fate. The date of the execution was fixed for 11 April.

The Peruvian representative in the UK appealed on Zender's behalf, but nothing in the petition changed the material facts, or the sentence. He was duly executed by a firing squad provided by the 3rd Battalion, Scots Guards.

What then had alerted the authorities to the activities of a spy simply through a few seemingly innocuous telegrams? Well, it was the wrong season for sardines! ●

THE KUT AIRLIFT

15 APRIL 1916

SITUATED ON a horseshoe bend of the River Tigris, the town of Kut Al Amara is ideal for defence, providing its garrison can be adequately supplied. Therein lay the main problem faced by Major General Charles Townshend when his Anglo-Indian 6th (Poona) Division came under siege by Ottoman forces on 7 December 1915.

As the winter came and went, Townshend's men grew increasingly short of food and other supplies. Relief expeditions were attempted early in 1916 but were rebuffed with heavy casualties. As the situation became more and more desperate, a plan was devised to undertake an airlift using Royal Aircraft Factory B.E.2cs and Maurice Farman Shorthorns of the Royal Flying Corps, together with Royal Naval Air Service aircraft. The operation began on 15 April 1916.

With the garrison requiring a minimum of 5,000lbs of supplies per day, notes the historian Michael Fricano, 'the Air Officer calculated that if each of his 14 [available] aircraft flew three times per day, that goal was theoretically achievable. Slinging flour sacks from the bomb racks and the wings, the operation began.' On the very first day of the airlift the quantities despatched failed to meet the requirements of the besieged troops on the ground – many of whom could only watch in horror as some of the bags of flour fell in the Tigris.

One officer describes the method used in the airdrops: 'The loads were strung below the fuselage and, when released at a height of 6,000 feet, fell turning over and leaving an aerial trail of flour till they plunged with dull thuds on to the plain near the brick kilns.'

ABOVE: Lieutenant J.R. McCrindle pictured in the cockpit of his B.E.2c prior to taking off for Kut - note the sack on the wing beside the cockpit.

A Major Anderson pointed out, 'it was only in the mornings and evenings that the aeroplanes could fly owing to the heat which overheated their engines and the number of trips per day seemed fearfully disappointing'. Problems with aircraft serviceability and poor weather also helped prevent the intended daily drop target being met (the average per day for the whole of the operation was about 2,500lbs). The situation was compounded when German fighters started to intercept the relief flights, necessitating the use of some of the British aircraft as escorts – carrying an observer, these 'planes were too heavy to carry any additional supplies.

It was not just food that was dropped during the airlift, notes the Official History, 'but salt, saccharine, opium, drugs and surgical dressings, mails, spare parts for wireless plant, money, and a millstone weighing seventy pounds, which was dropped by means of a parachute'. By the time the airlift was halted on 29 April 1916, a total of 19,000lbs of supplies had been dropped in 140 flights. Of this amount, 2,200lbs had either fallen into the water or missed the target and been claimed by the enemy.

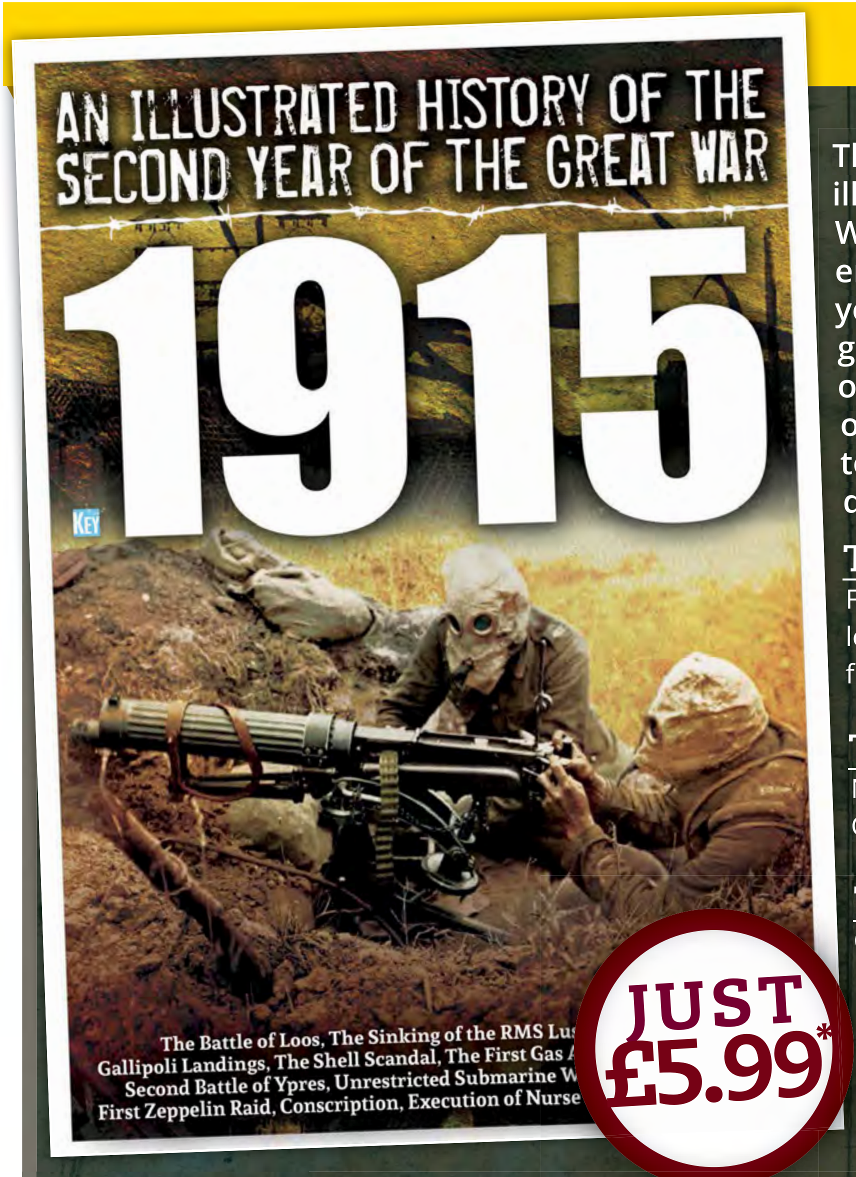
Though it had been the first time in war that such an operation had been undertaken, it was described by Townshend as 'a complete failure'. Indeed, the very day that the airlift ended, the Turks accepted the surrender of Kut's garrison. ●

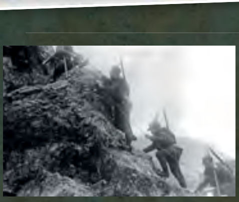
BELOW: Though poor quality, this picture shows B.E.2cs of 30 Squadron about to take off on the last resupply flight to Kut on 29 April 1916.

BELOW: One of the aircraft involved in the Kut Airlift. This B.E.2c of 30 Squadron RFC, serial number 4362, undertook a total of twelve flights at the hands of Lieutenant J.R. McCrindle.

AN ILLUSTRATED HISTORY OF THE SECOND YEAR OF THE GREAT WAR

A BRITAIN AT WAR SPECIAL


AN ILLUSTRATED HISTORY OF THE SECOND YEAR OF THE GREAT WAR
1915
KEY
The Battle of Loos, The Sinking of the RMS Lus
Gallipoli Landings, The Shell Scandal, The First Gas
Second Battle of Ypres, Unrestricted Submarine W
First Zeppelin Raid, Conscription, Execution of Nurse
JUST £5.99*



The second of Key Publications' illustrated histories of the First World War examines the all-encompassing nature of second year of the conflict. From ambitious grand strategies, to individual acts of valour, every aspect of this year of hope and frustration is brought to the reader in unique text and dynamic images.

THE YEAR OF RESIGNATIONS

Fisher, Churchill, French and Hamilton all lose their positions; the government is forced into coalition.

THE YEAR OF GLOBAL WAR

New fronts are opened in the Dardanelles, Gallipoli, Salonica, Egypt, Italy and Africa.

THE YEAR OF SHAME

Civilians are victims as Britain is bombed by Zeppelins, Lusitania is sunk and Nurse Cavell is executed.

THE YEAR OF TECHNOLOGY

Poison gas, flamethrowers and steel helmets appear on the battlefield for the first time; the first tank is designed and completes its test run.

AND MUCH MORE!

ORDER DIRECT:

JUST £5.99+FREE P&P*

*Free 2nd class P&P on all UK & BFPO orders. Overseas charges apply.

1072/15

Free P&P* when you order online at
www.keypublishing.com/shop

OR

Call UK: 01780 480404
Overseas: +44 1780 480404
Monday to Friday 9am-5:30pm

SUBSCRIBERS CALL FOR YOUR £1.00 DISCOUNT!

SIR ROGER CASEMENT CAPTURED

21 APRIL 1916

FOR CENTURIES many in Ireland had sought independence from Britain. A degree of self-government had been permitted by London, and a Parliament of Ireland had been established with limited powers. Then in 1800 the Kingdom of Ireland and the Kingdom of Great Britain were amalgamated to form the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland. The Irish Parliament was abolished with, instead, its representatives having seats in the United Kingdom Parliament at Westminster.

This change was opposed by large numbers of people who saw Irish affairs being dictated by a government in which they had little say and limited influence. During the course of the nineteenth century attempts were made to persuade Britain to allow Ireland to rule and Britain's refusal to permit this eventually led to armed rebellion in the Fenian Rising of 1867. The rising was poorly coordinated and failed, but it highlighted the strength of feeling amongst the Irish. A number of attempts were made to pass legislation that would allow Home Rule in Ireland but these were unable to pass both Houses of Parliament. The problem lay in the religious divide in Ireland. The comparatively few, largely land-owning, Protestants feared that an independent Irish republic would be dominated by Catholics which formed the bulk of the population.

ABOVE: Michael Francis Doyle was a lawyer from Philadelphia who assisted in the defence of Sir Roger Casement during his trial in the Old Bailey.

Various republican groups were formed with the sole intention of fighting for independence and in response unionist organizations also grew up, including the Ulster Volunteer Force, which armed itself in fear of an uprising by the Catholics.

The outbreak of war saw many Irishmen volunteer for the British Army (which always had a high proportion of Irish soldiers in its ranks) in its fight against Germany. The nationalists, however, took a different view. They saw Germany as a possible ally in throwing off the British yolk and members of the Irish Republican Brotherhood (IRB) travelled to Germany to try and enlist support for a rebellion against Britain. Led by Sir Roger Casement and Joseph Plunkett a plan was presented to Berlin in which the republicans would stage an uprising in the Irish capital

ABOVE: Sir Roger Casement.
(NATIONAL LIBRARY OF IRELAND; CAS1A)

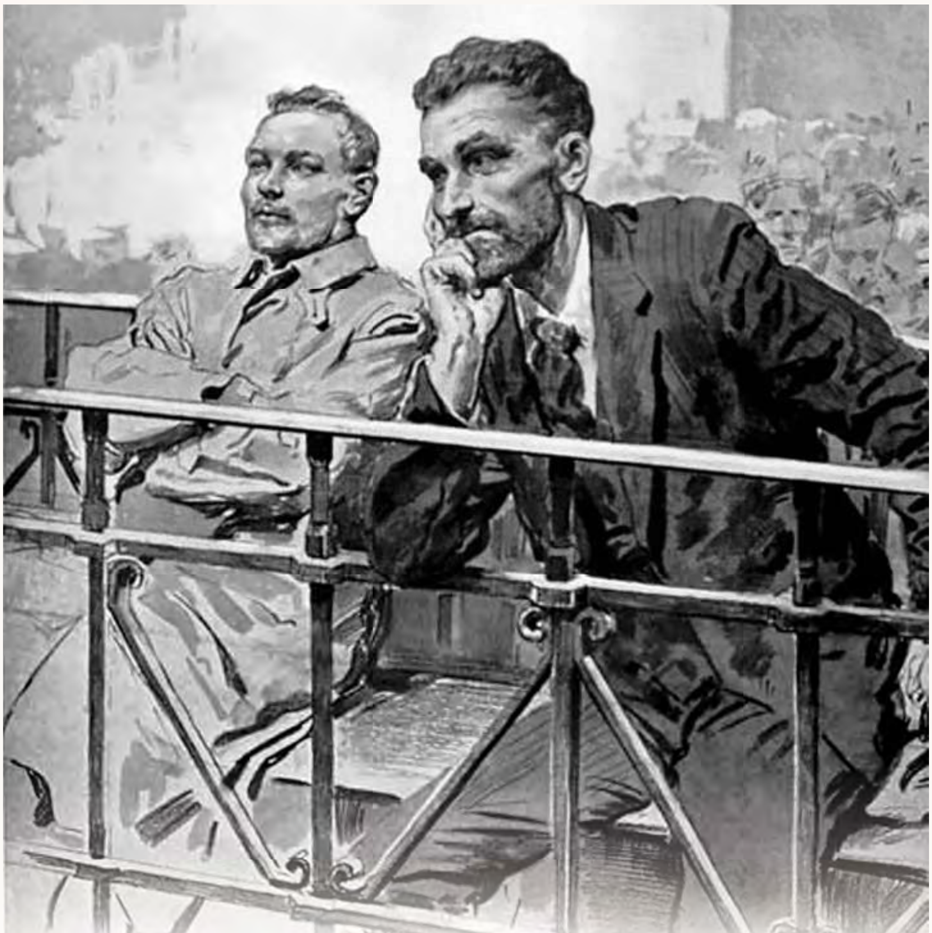
ABOVE: The sweeping open beach at Banna Strand where Sir Roger Casement was put ashore on 21 April 1916, only to be almost immediately captured.

to draw British troops into Dublin, whilst a German expeditionary force would land on the west coast of Ireland. Casement also tried to raise an 'Irish Brigade' from among Irish prisoners of war.

Though German support was limited to an agreement to ship arms to the rebels, the IRB, in conjunction with another strong republican group, the Irish Citizen Army, decided to mount a rebellion at Easter 1916. The Germans duly agreed to supply 20,000 rifles (nearly all of which were captured Russian Mosin–Nagant 1891 rifles), 1,000,000 rounds of ammunition, ten machine-guns, as well as a quantity of explosives. Though they had been requested, the Germans refused to provide a number of military advisors.

The arms were loaded onboard the merchant vessel SS *Libau*. Built by Earles Shipbuilding in Kingston-Upon-Hull in 1911 and originally named *Castro*, this British-operated vessel was sailing through the Kiel Canal in August 1914 when Britain declared war on Germany. Seized by the German authorities, the ship was subsequently renamed *Libau.* Under the command of *Kapitänleutnant* Karl Spindler, and with a crew of twenty-two, it sailed with its concealed cargo from Lübeck on 9 April 1916 – by which point it had been disguised as the Norwegian vessel *Aud*.

The plan was that *Libau* would be met by a reception team, including a pilot to guide the ship to Fenit Pier, off the Irish coast. However, the U-boat carrying some of these individuals was delayed by mechanical problems. When *Libau* arrived in Tralee Bay on the afternoon of Thursday, 20 April 1916, Spindler was unaware of these problems. The ship steamed around the bay, its crew looking for the pre-arranged signal, but it never came.



ABOVE: **A drawing depicting Sir Roger Casement in the dock at Bow Street Police Court when the charges against him were read out on 15 May 1916. He is sat beside Daniel Julian Bailey, who served in the Irish Brigade. The pair were committed to trial on 17 May 1916, the proceedings beginning on 26 June. When the trial was held at the Old Bailey, no evidence was offered by the prosecution against Bailey, and he was found not guilty of any crime. He returned to the Army, being transferred to the Wiltshire Regiment on 1 July 1916, and by the Armistice had been appointed Acting Corporal.**

At around 05.00 hours the next morning, *Libau* was stopped and boarded by a Royal Navy boarding party. Spindler managed to convince the officer in charge that his vessel was Norwegian, at which point, it is stated, he was informed that the search was on for a German steamer trying to land weapons.

Armed with the knowledge that the British were aware of *Libau*'s existence and having not managed to make contact with the reception party, Spindler ordered his crew to sail. Soon after the ship was again intercepted by two Royal Navy warships and ordered to put in at Queenstown (now Cobh).

As *Libau* entered Cork Harbour under escort on the morning of the 22nd, Spindler ordered his crew to don their German uniforms and run up a German naval battle ensign. He then ordered that the steamer be scuttled. The explosion ripped the side of the ship beneath the water line. 'The *Aud*, as if drawn down by an invisible hand, sank with a loud hissing noise,' Spindler later wrote.

Roger Casement, who was transported back to Ireland in the German submarine *U-19*, was also captured having been put ashore at Banna Strand in Tralee Bay on the morning of 21 April. He was taken to the Tower of London and tried for high treason at the Old Bailey. In the meantime, British officials privately circulated diaries, seemingly in his hand, which detailed homosexual activity, the intention presumably being to discredit him and so ensure that he did not achieve the status of a martyr for the Irish cause. Despite much support and a strong defence team, he was found guilty of treason. Before his execution he was received into the Roman Catholic Church. Despite many appeals, including one from the US Senate, Sir Roger Casement was hanged at Pentonville Prison on 3 August 1916.

Through intercepted transmissions British Naval Intelligence had been aware of the arms shipment and the planned Easter Rising. The information was passed onto the Under-Secretary for Ireland, Sir Matthew Nathan. He was urged to pre-empt the rising by rounding up the republican leaders, but as the source of the information was not revealed to Nathan, he doubted its accuracy. He therefore decided to seek approval from London before taking any action. It was all the time the rebels needed. ●

MONUMENT

ROGER
CASEMENT

This monument to Casement can be seen at Banna Strand. The inscription states: 'At a spot on Banna beach adjacent to here Roger Casement – Humanitarian & Irish revolutionary leader – Robert Monteith & a third man came ashore from a German submarine on Good Friday morning 21 April 1916 in furthering the cause of Irish freedom.' The mysterious 'third man' was Daniel Julian Bailey, a soldier in the Royal Irish Rifles who, whilst being held by the Germans as a prisoner of war, was recruited (as Daniel Beverley) into the so-called 'Casement', or 'Irish', Brigade (which in turn was led by Monteith). Monteith avoided capture, unlike his two companions. (IMAGE: COURTESY OF DENNIS SHEEHAN)

THE EASTER RISING

24 APRIL 1916

THE NEWS of the failed arms delivery and the capture of Sir Roger Casement did not deter the Irish republicans from their long-held ambition of ejecting the British from their country, and on Easter Monday the rebels took to the streets across Dublin and in a few other towns. The first shot was fired shortly after midday, killing an unarmed policeman. What the rebels presupposed was that as soon as the uprising began the Catholic population would turn out en masse across the country in support. With British troops therefore tied down suppressing the general revolt, the republicans would be able to overwhelm the forces isolated in Dublin. This did not happen.

Nevertheless, the British military in the capital was caught unawares and the republicans were able to capture a number of key buildings including Dublin City Hall. Their attack upon Dublin Castle, the British Army's main stronghold in Dublin, failed, even though its garrison amounted to just three soldiers. The republicans thought the lack of men in the castle was a ruse to draw them into mounting an assault against its walls. By the time it was realized that there really were only three soldiers manning its defences reinforcements were already taking up their positions.

ABOVE: **All that remained of the Metropole Hotel, beside the General Post Office on Sackville Street (now O'Connell Street) in Dublin after the Easter Rising in 1916.** (NATIONAL LIBRARY OF IRELAND; KE110)

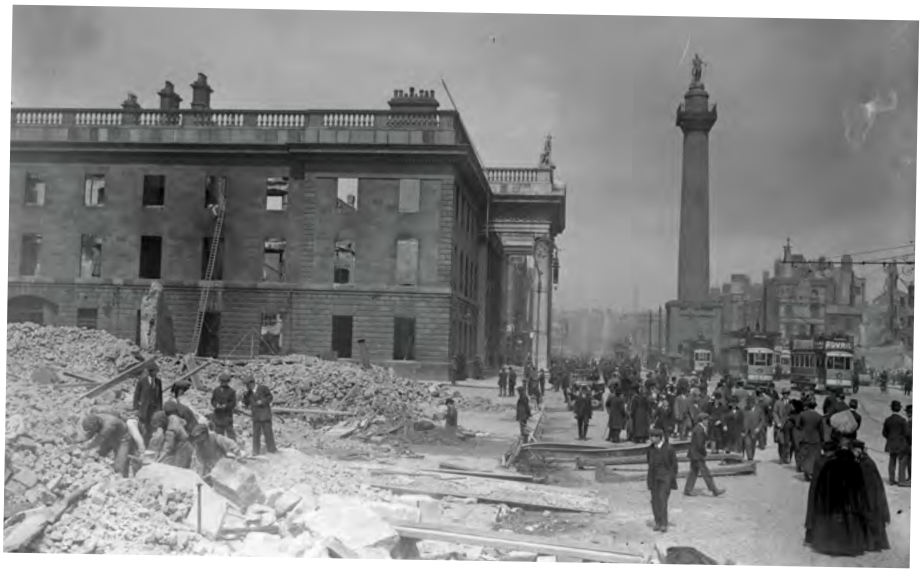
Away from the city centre houses commanding most of the canal bridges on the south side of the River Liffey were occupied and held in strength and, beyond the canal, buildings commanding the junction of the roads from Kingstown were similarly seized; the occupants being summarily ejected. The rebels therefore successfully cut internal communications but the terminus of the Great Southern and Western Railway and that of the Great Northern were well both defended by British troops and remained so throughout the uprising.

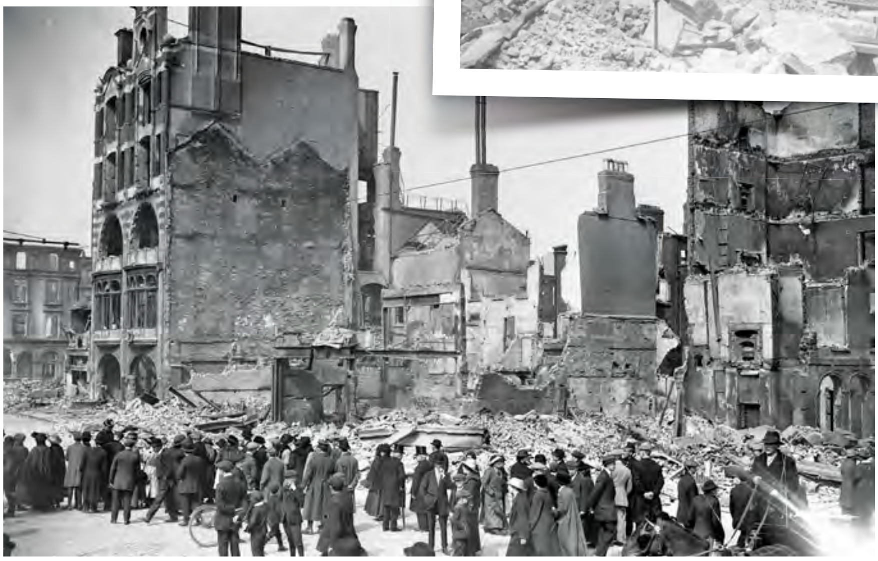
By the afternoon of Easter Monday most of the city centre was firmly in rebel hands, with a strong cordon of fortified posts in the suburbs. One place in the centre of Dublin stood 'like a rock in the surge of revolution'. That place was Trinity College which occupies a strategic position in the city. Its defence was organized by Captain Alton, a Fellow of the university, who decided that he only had enough men to hold the main block of buildings, which commanded the streets in front and had an open field of fire in the rear across college park. Its gates were barricaded; sandbags were placed in the windows and on the parapets of the roof. Every sign of movement by the rebels was

ABOVE: **Men surveying the wreckage of Linenhall Barracks in the aftermath of the Easter Rising in Dublin.** (NATIONAL LIBRARY OF IRELAND; KE108)

ABOVE: **Evidence of the fighting during the Easter Rising can be seen in this picture of Abbey Street and Sackville Street.** (NATIONAL LIBRARY OF IRELAND; KE119) immediately met with rapid rifle fire, and so formidable did the college appear, no assault was attempted by the republicans.

The following day, the Lord Lieutenant, Lord Wimborne declared martial law and handed control to Brigadier-General William Lowe. As the rebels had not taken control of either the city's main train stations or the port, the British were able to ship reinforcements quickly and unimpeded into Dublin over the course of the next few days. The rebels did manage to cut the railway lines beyond the city but the effect of this was only to stop commercial traffic, preventing food from reaching the city.





ABOVE: The shell of the General Post Office on Sackville Street in the aftermath of the 1916 Rising. (NATIONAL LIBRARY OF IRELAND; KE121)

LEFT: The remains of the Dublin Bread Company at 6-7 Lower Sackville Street (now O'Connell Street) after the Easter Rising in 1916. (NATIONAL LIBRARY OF IRELAND; KE115)

BELOW: Jeremiah C. Lynch was a naturalised American who was sentenced to death for his part in the Easter Rising. However, though this verdict of the Field General Court Martial was confirmed by the General Officer Commanding-in-Chief, it was subsequently commuted to ten years' penal servitude following the intervention of the US State Department. (US LIBRARY OF CONGRESS)

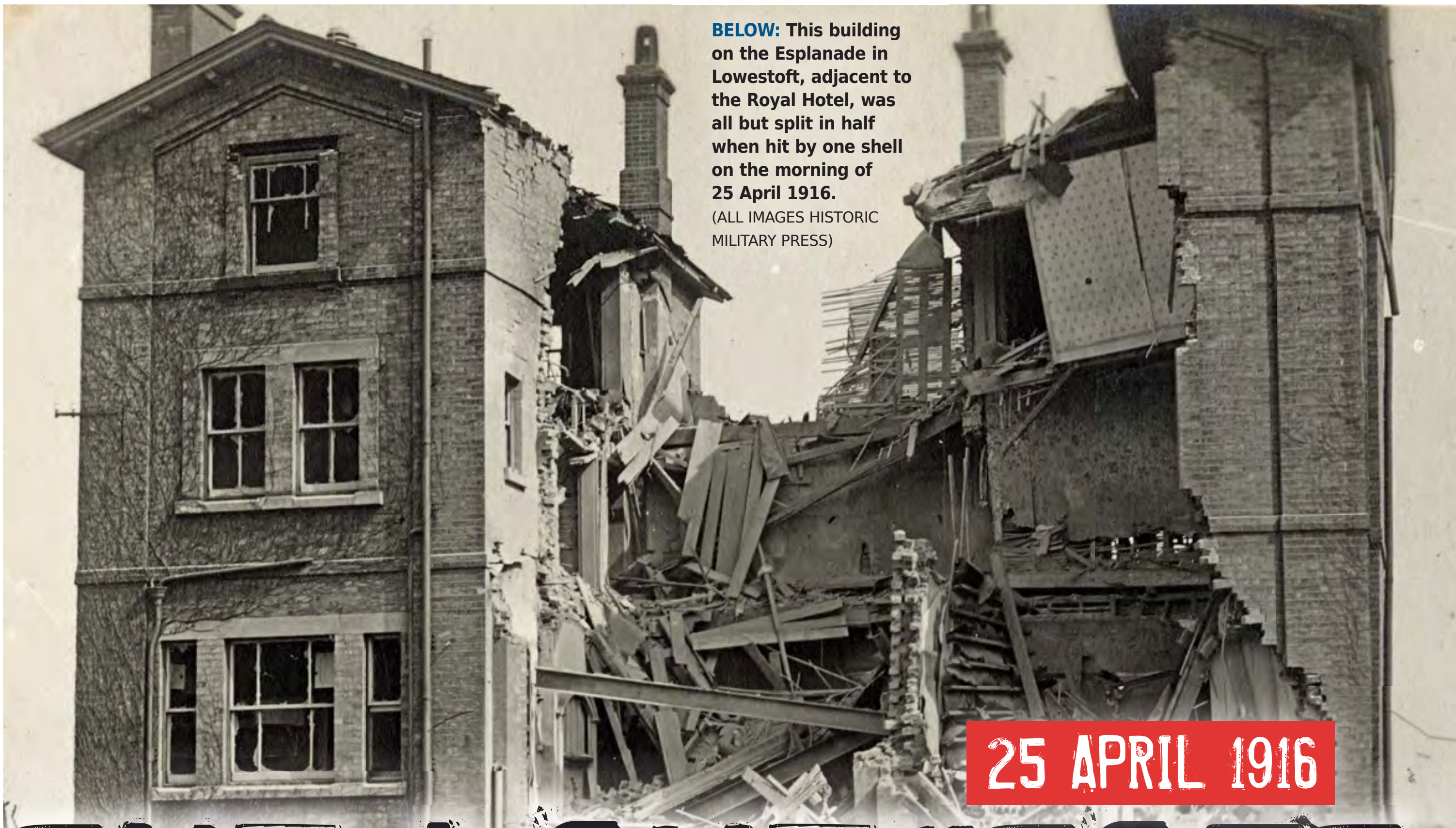
Deadly street fighting saw mounting casualties and normal life in the city was completely disrupted. As a precaution all gas and electricity supplies were cut off and, with shops closed and food becoming increasingly scarce, the situation in Dublin was rapidly becoming desperate. As a result the British troops, bringing with them the prospect of a restoration of normality, were well received by much of the population. 'They gave the troops from England a welcome which vastly surprised these unfamiliar men,' ran one account, 'who imagined at the outset that every inhabitant of the city was a potential enemy.'

By Wednesday the 26th, the British forces were strong enough to take back many of the rebel-held buildings. There simply was not enough insurgents to hold a city the size of Dublin and whilst they occupied many buildings they did not have the strength to maintain communication between each post. This meant that the British troops were able to isolate each building and overwhelm the defenders. After three more days of fighting only small pockets of resistance remained. A report in *The Times* of 2 May read as follows: 'On Saturday night, P.H. Pearse, one of the signatories of the proclamation of the Irish Republic, went to military headquarters and surrendered. The surrender was, of course, unconditional. Afterwards numbers of men came out from the ravaged regions of the General Post Office and surrendered under a white flag.'

The Easter Rising cost the rebels sixty-four men killed with an unknown number wounded who escaped back into the community. The British Army suffered far heavier casualties with 132 dead and 397 wounded. As is always the case in such circumstances in a densely-populated city, it was the civilians who suffered the most. More than 250 were killed and some 2,217 were wounded or injured.

Such a serious outbreak, with so many casualties, did not go unpunished. A large number of 'Sinn Feiners' were arrested and almost 1,500 were interned in mainland Britain. A total of ninety were sentenced to death, though only sixteen were actually executed.

The rising did not have popular support and the civilian casualties and the damage done to the Irish capital brought widespread condemnation from across the country. Nevertheless, the rebels had declared an independent Irish Republic, a concept that the majority in Ireland could support. The treatment of the rebels, in particular the imprisonment of so many men, however, proved a serious mistake. It showed the Irish people that the country was in the hands of an occupying power and led them to believe that they would never achieve independence. The consequence was the rise of Sinn Féin as a major political force and the Declaration of Independence which read: 'We solemnly declare foreign government in Ireland to be an invasion of our national right which we will never tolerate, and we demand the evacuation of our country by the English Garrison.' The armed rebellion of Easter 1916 may have been supressed, but the fight for an Irish Republic was far from over. ●



BELOW: **This building on the Esplanade in Lowestoft, adjacent to the Royal Hotel, was all but split in half when hit by one shell on the morning of 25 April 1916.** (ALL IMAGES HISTORIC MILITARY PRESS)

25 APRIL 1916

THE LOWESTOFT

JUST AS dawn was breaking on the morning of Tuesday, 25 April 1916, the people of the coastal towns of Lowestoft and Great Yarmouth were awoken by the sound of shells slamming into their communities. Although the ports had only a small military relevance, the German fleet had despatched a battlecruiser squadron with accompanying cruisers and destroyers to bombard them, the main aim being to entice out defending ships which could then be picked off either by the battlecruiser squadron or by the full High Seas Fleet, which was stationed at sea ready to intervene if an opportunity presented itself.

It was Lowestoft that was the first to be targeted by the German warships. A correspondent for the Press Association wrote the following account which appeared in the *Aberdeen Journal* two days later: 'It was about four o'clock that the dark outlines of warships were observed well out to sea, and ten minutes afterwards the booming of guns and the whirring of shells awakened those of the inhabitants who were still in bed. Then commenced a terrific bombardment.

'Gun after gun flashed out and huge shells came screeching and crashing in all directions. The few that struck burst with terrific force, and slates, tiles, broken masonry and pieces of shell were flying everywhere. Then a broadside of four guns was launched, and this it was that did most damage. One house was split in halves, and collapsed, and another was all but demolished. Three persons were killed in the former case, and one man in the second. In other cases people were cut by falling glass, bits of shell, and brickwork.'

The same account elaborated on the casualties suffered: 'Three of the killed were from one house in Sandringham Street, which was wrecked by a shell, which went clean through it, bringing down the upper floor, in which the family slept. Two were brother and sister, Sidney Herbert Davey (16) and Annie Davey (21), and the third, the nine months' old son of Mrs Mumford, a widow. The latter was seriously injured. The father of the Daveys, Mr Wm. Robert Davey (64), is employed at the Lowestoft Corporation Electric Works, and he and his wife are suffering from shock and slight injuries. Their other two children were slightly injured.

'A man asleep in a house which caught fire after being wrecked by a shell was killed. These casualties were in the northern part of the town, which, however, suffered least from the bombardment. Greater material damage was done on the south side, which the German gunners apparently made their chief objective. While more houses were wrecked here, not a single death occurred, and the only serious injury was that suffered by Mr H. Nestling, special constable. Beside houses more or less wrecked, a number were damaged by flying shell fragments and concussion. Several of the shells went four or five miles inland, as far as Somerleyton, where they did little damage. Several great holes in the ground afford the only evidence of their arrival.'

A convalescent home, a swimming bath, the pier, and forty residential properties were extensively damaged; a further 200 homes had been slightly damaged. Two men, one woman, and one child were killed, three persons were seriously wounded, and nine slightly wounded. Not everyone, however, had sought shelter during the shelling. 'Crowds flocked to the cliffs and other points dominating a sweep of the sea, and watched the inspiring spectacle,' continued the Press Association's reporter. 'By six o'clock the enemy ships were well down on the horizon, but low rumblings seaward denoted a continuance of the firing. Then it ceased, and all was very calm after the fury and stress of the bombardment. While some of the shells fell in the town, others went a considerable distance inland. In these rural districts two animals were injured. After the raid was over people went souvenir-hunting, and many pieces of shell were retrieved and treasured as mementoes of the event.'

With their work at Lowestoft completed, the German warships then moved off to Great Yarmouth, but fog made it difficult to see the targets there. Royal Navy warships also began to engage the attackers.

Of the raid on Great Yarmouth, the *East Anglian Daily Times* stated: 'Just after daybreak on Tuesday morning the inhabitants of Yarmouth were awakened by the firing of heavy guns from the sea. Soon houses appeared to be heaving and rocking through the violence of what proved to be enemy guns.

'The noise was terrific, and presently above the din could be heard the screech of shells passing overhead and loud reports of their bursting. Many of the population began to seek safety, as it became evident that what at first was believed to be a naval action was something more sinister. Shells burst in the sea and others burst over houses in the town, their scattered fragments flying over various localities. No one appears to have suffered any injury, nor was there any serious damage to property in the Southtown beyond the breaking of some palisadings and stonework.

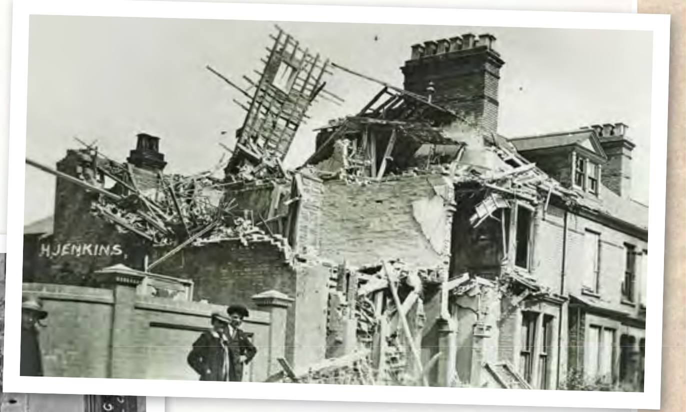
'The firing was the most severe on the two extremes of the town. To the north several large craters were formed by shells in the denes and the marshes, one at the Corporation nursery near the destructor being of remarkable size and depth. It was a remarkable sight after the bombardment had subsided to see children digging in the craters for pieces of shells.

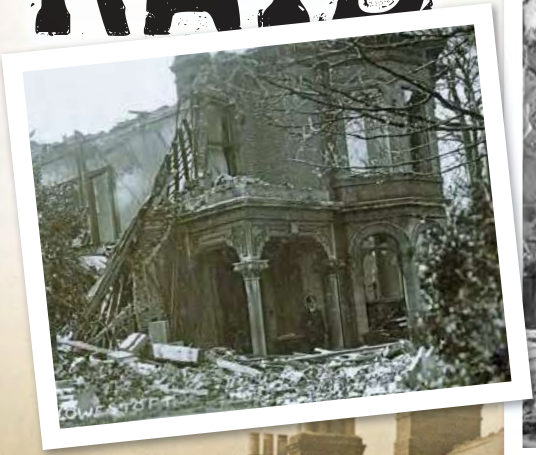
'At the south end of the town the bombardment was more effective. Large blocks of fishing premises were smashed by shells and set on fire, and various other buildings, including the corporation electricity station, were peppered with steel fragments. Happily, no one was hurt, and the town really had a marvellous escape. The fishing premises, despite the exertions of the fire brigade, were gutted, and an adjoining barrel factory suffered.'

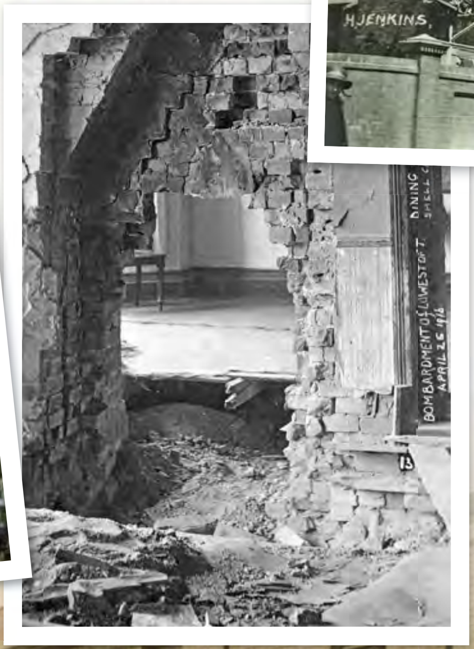
Another reporter writing from Yarmouth noted how 'every house in the town seemed to be shaken'. He added that 'some people dressed and set out for the country, with the object of putting distance between themselves and the shrieking shells. Others left their houses for the marshes, and no one was able to sleep through the terrible clamour made by the constant reports of the big guns.'

Though the raid had achieved little in terms of the Germans' original aim of engaging the Royal Navy, the British government was forced to react, chiefly by redeploying warships to be able to better and more quickly respond should such attacks be repeated. ●

RAID







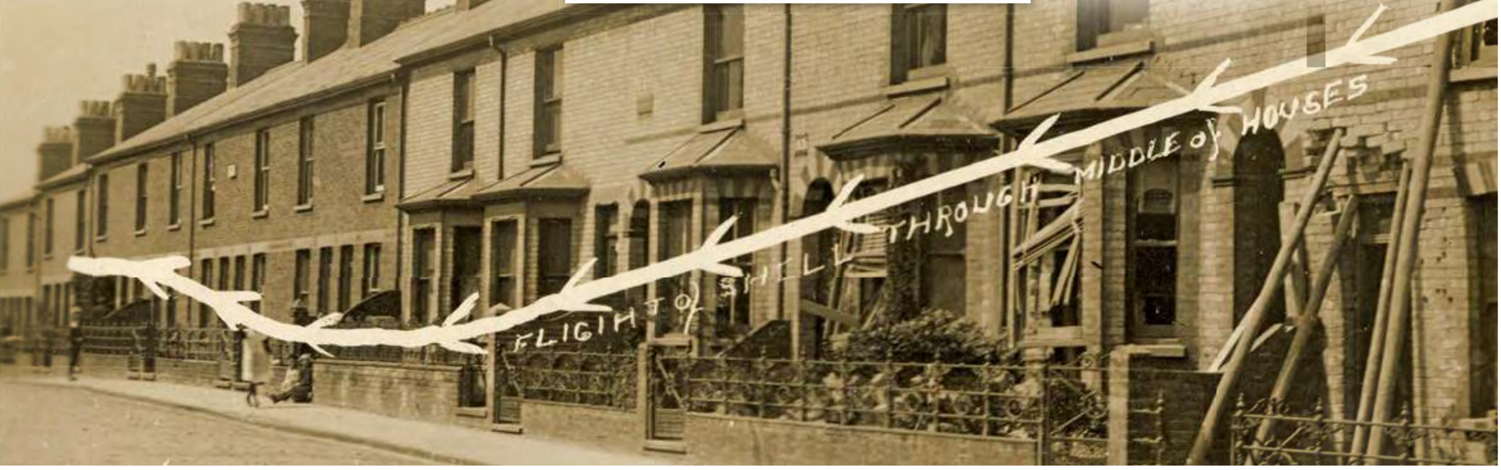
FAR LEFT: When North End, Yarmouth Road, Lowestoft, was hit by a shell, the occupier was trapped under the rubble. Unable to escape, he died in the fire that broke out.

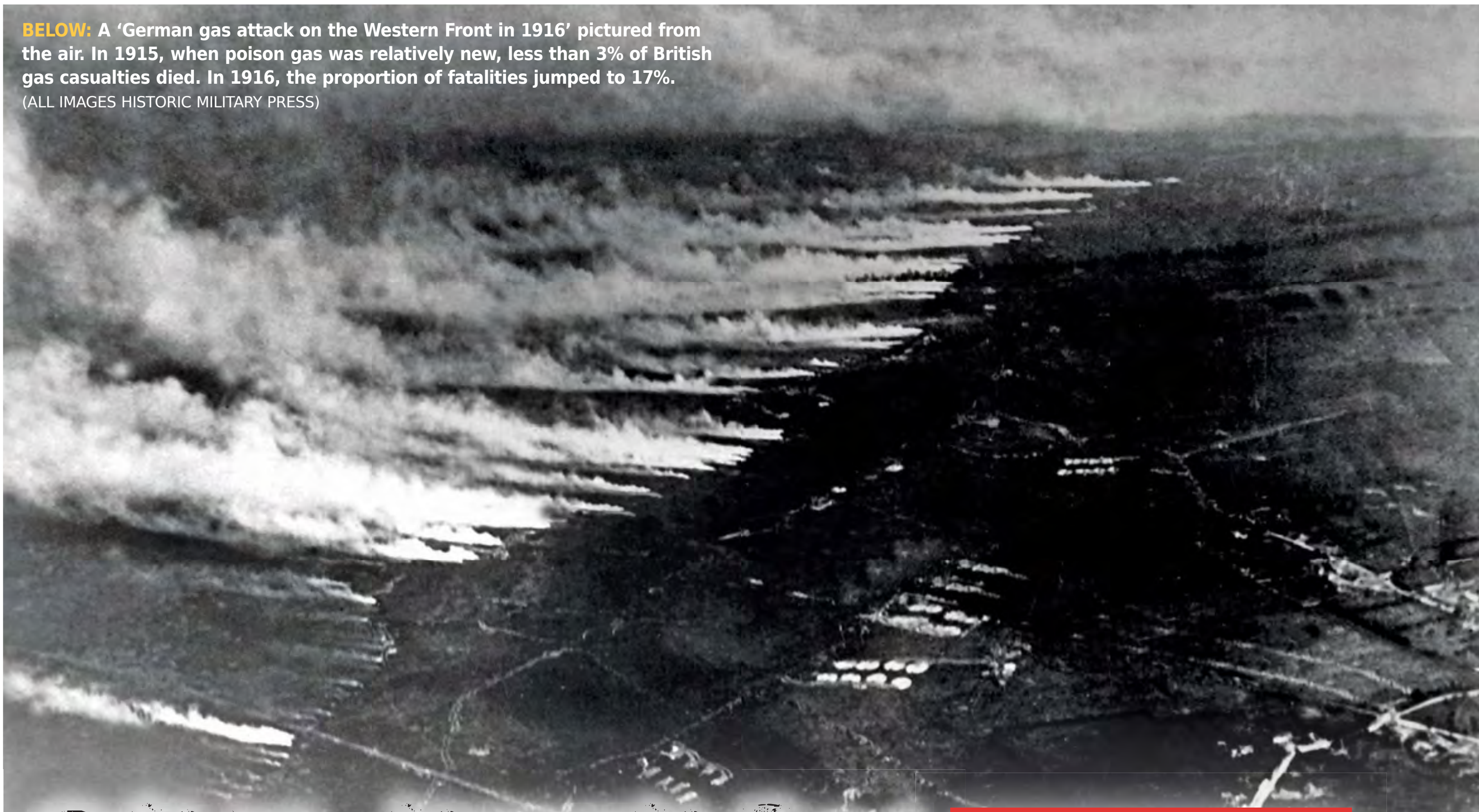
LEFT: The dining room of Banner House, Lowestoft, after one German shell crashed through a window.

ABOVE: The effects of the bombardment that could be seen in Lowestoft's Cleveland Road.

OPPOSITE PAGE: An unexploded shell pictured after the bombardment of Lowestoft and Great Yarmouth.

BELOW: In Kent Road, Lowestoft, one 12-inch shell crashed through thirteen houses – as indicated here – and came to rest in the last one without exploding.





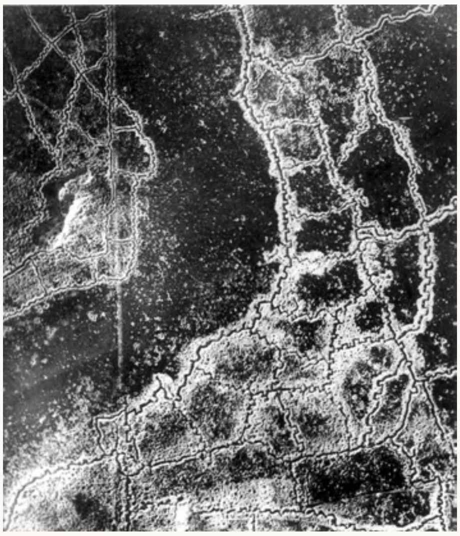
BELOW: A 'German gas attack on the Western Front in 1916' pictured from the air. In 1915, when poison gas was relatively new, less than 3% of British gas casualties died. In 1916, the proportion of fatalities jumped to 17%.
(ALL IMAGES HISTORIC MILITARY PRESS)

GAS ATTACK AT HULLUCH

27 APRIL 1916

FOR SOME time there had been suspicions that the Germans were preparing to use chemical weapons to attack the trenches held by the British I Corps between Loos and Hulluch. This was ground that had been won at the Battle of Loos in 1915, and the respective positions, which were only 120 to 300 yards apart, had changed little since the end of that comparatively successful British offensive. It was the appearance of large numbers of rats leaving the German trenches and entering No Man's Land that first raised concerns. This 'exodus' was a sure sign of leaking gas cylinders. These suspicions were confirmed on the night of 23/24 April 1916 when a deserter came over to the British positions and declared that a gas attack was imminent against the Hulluch front.

Lieutenant General C.T. McM Kavanagh issued a warning to his divisions and moved up all his reserve artillery. On the 24th and 25th there was a brisk wind blowing from the south-east which was too strong for the release of gas, but on the 26th the wind moderated and the Germans shelled the sectors held by the 16th (Irish) Division. On the 27th the weather was warm and fine and the wind entirely favourable for a gas attack. At about 05.10 hours chlorine gas clouds, with brownish smoke behind them, blotted out the rising sun. The gas alert, for which everyone was prepared, was given, and the I Corps' artillery immediately began to shell the rear of the German lines from where the gas was being released.



ABOVE: An aerial view of the battlefield around Hulluch showing how close the British and German lines were in places. The German trenches are at the right and bottom; British trenches are at the top left. The vertical line to the left of centre indicates the course of a pre-war road or track.

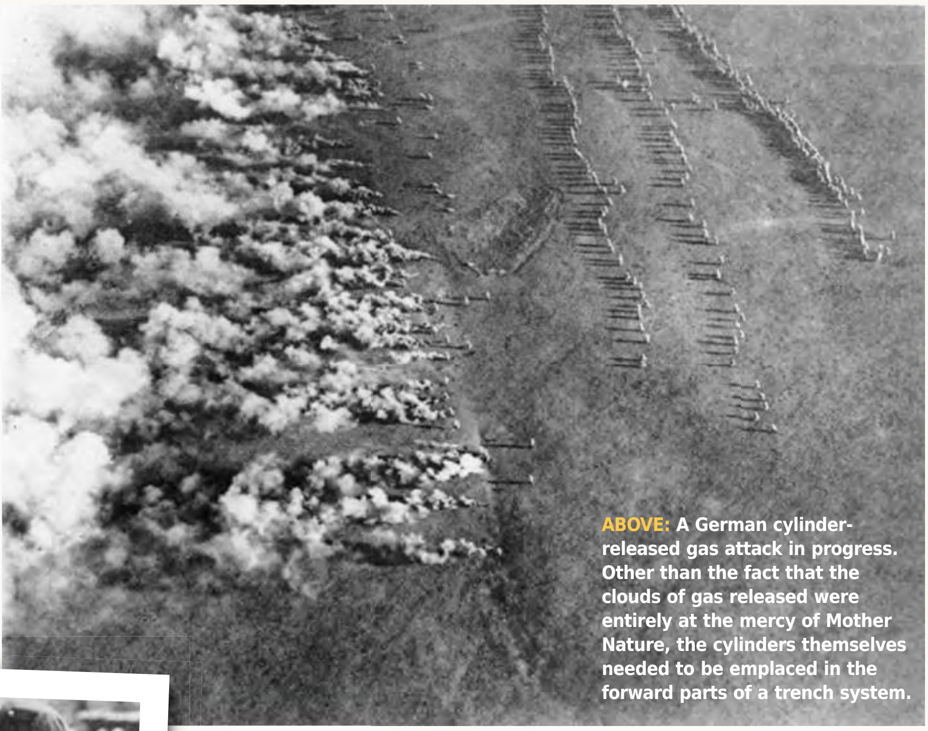
The war correspondent Philip Gibb described the attack: 'The Irish were holding a chalk pit at Hullock [*sic*], and experienced a hellish bombardment on the 27th. For a day and a night the whole of the Loos salient was throbbing with high explosions.

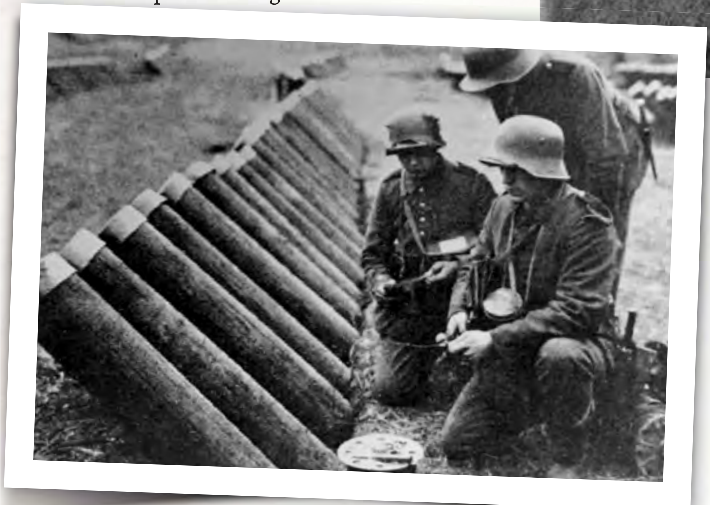
'The officers rallied their men with a cry of "steady, boys!" Then at 5 in the morning came a sudden shout of warning, "Gas!" The division donned their helmets ... The men then fearlessly awaited the oncoming cloud, behind which were the German infantry. The Dublin Fusiliers fiercely repelled the attack. A German officer and 47 German soldiers were found dead, the bodies being entangled in the barbed-wire. At one point a second attack was made.

'After more gas, the Germans reached the position of the Inniskillings and Dublin Fusiliers, but the Irishmen made a counter-attack, and ejected the enemy in half an hour. It was the first time this Irish division had been in action, but the young soldiers were magnificently cool.'

The Germans themselves suffered the effects of their own gas, caused, most probably, by gas cylinders being blown up by the British shells. A number of them were seen to climb out of their trenches and run back to their support lines. With the opposing trenches being so close, most of these were picked off by the Irish as they tried to escape the deadly mixture of chlorine and phosgene.

A second gas attack was delivered on the night of the 29th, but with even less success than that of two days earlier. The details of this attack were revealed in a German account: 'On the 29th, the wind was less favourable than on the 27th, but at 3.45 a.m., by higher order, gas was released by the 9th [Bavarian] Regiment. In places and at times there was a calm, and the direction of the wind frequently veered. The gas crept over the enemy positions as far as the 3rd line, but then returned and flooded the trenches of the 9th Bavarian Regiment and partly those of the 5th. The unexpected change had the result that the gas masks were not put on in the German trenches in time or with the necessary calm and care, and the 9th Regiment had heavy losses to bewail – dead 1 officer and 132 men; gas sick, 6 officers and 280 men, of whom 30 subsequently died.'


ABOVE: A German cylinder-released gas attack in progress. Other than the fact that the clouds of gas released were entirely at the mercy of Mother Nature, the cylinders themselves needed to be emplaced in the forward parts of a trench system.


ABOVE: German troops preparing a gas attack using the cylinder release method. The first delivery system employed, the use of cylinders had the advantage that they were simple and, in suitable atmospheric conditions, produced a concentrated cloud. The disadvantages, however, were many – as the events at Hulluch graphically illustrated.

It was not just the soldiers of the two sides that suffered in the gas attacks, as Lieutenant Colonel R.G.A. Hamilton, of the Royal Artillery recalled: 'There was a terrible scene with the local inhabitants [at Mont Kemmel] who had hysterics and got in our way. They had not enough masks to go round, and had refused to send away their children as I had frequently warned them for the last two days. It was not till the gas cloud was just on us that they could be persuaded to fly ... The gas being very heavy travels along valleys, so I told them to keep along the ridge ... I was only just in time. Suddenly the cattle and dogs set up a piteous noise and we smelt the chlorine gas. Helmets were put on immediately, but not before I could feel the irritation in my throat.

'With helmets on, we could not taste the chlorine, and in the darkness it could not be seen; but we knew it was on us by the way the howls of the dogs and the bellowing of the cattle ceased.' Just how powerful the gas was could be seen through the effect it has on the crops in the adjacent fields. 'It must have travelled in a straight line as one could follow its path quite easily. There were large fields of clover that might have been divided in half with a ruler, one half bright green and the other a chocolate brown,' Hamilton observed. When he went over and picked a handful of the brown clover he found that it had been burnt by the acid gas.

Colonel Hamilton also noted a particular act of courage that morning. A sentry in the front line, on first smelling the gas, gave the alarm to the other men by striking his warning gong before putting on his helmet. The result was that he fell dead the moment the gas cloud enveloped him.

One of his officers was asleep when the alarm sounded and he rushed out of his dugout without changing. He fought that morning in pajamas and bedroom slippers.

Total British casualties for the period of the German attack, 27–29 April, were 1,980, of whom 1,260 were gas casualties, 338 being killed. Varying figures have been given for German casualties with an average assessment of around 1,600. ●

ABOVE: A number of those killed in the German gas attack on 27 April 1916, are buried in Philosophe British Military Cemetery near Mazingarbe. (COURTESY OF THE COMMONWEALTH WAR GRAVES COMMISSION)

GERMAN U-BOAT CAPTURED

27 APRIL 1916

LAUNCHED ON 13 June 1915, the German Type UC mine-laying submarine *UC-5* had a range of more than 900 nautical miles and carried twelve mines. Commanded by *Oberleutnant zur See* Herbert Pustkuchen, and later *Oberleutnant zur See* Ulrich Mohrbutter, *UC-5* had already sunk four ships since she had arrived at Zeebrugge on 27 July 1915 to form part of the Flanders Flotilla of some fourteen or fifteen UB and UC boats under the command of *Korvettenkapitän* Karl Bartenbach.

Her last patrol began when she left Bruges on the morning of Easter Monday, 24 April 1916. When she arrived outside Zeebrugge she spotted a Royal Navy monitor and six destroyers off the coast and so turned back. The following day *UC-5* made another attempt to break out into the Channel but, after travelling for a few hours, came across a line of British anti-submarine nets and so turned back once again. She finally left Zeebrugge on the Wednesday morning and succeeded in passing under the nets, the crew reporting that they heard them scraping along the top of the boat.

The U-boat continued to travel throughout the day, sometimes on the surface and at other times submerged. Then, at midnight on 27 April 1916, she ran aground.

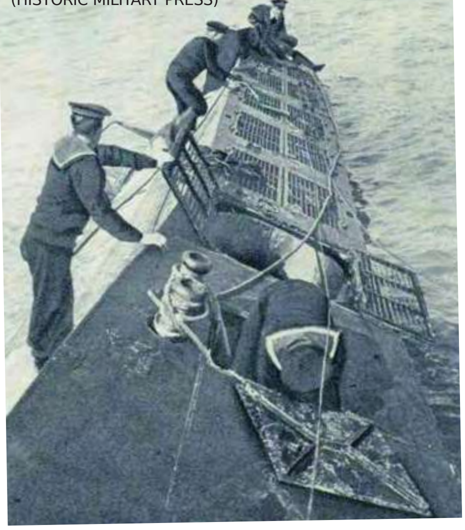
In a bid to lighten the boat so that she could be refloated, every non-essential item was thrown overboard, including lead pigs from the keel. Surfacing, at around 06.00 hours, she bumped along the bottom until, about three hours later, she ran directly onto the sands of a long narrow shoal called the Shipwash, which is about ten miles off Harwich.

Oberleutnant zur See Mohrbutter tried to free *UC-5* with the engine, and then by throwing overboard anything else that could be disposed of, but, despite every effort to refloat his command, Mohrbutter had to accept that she was irrevocably trapped and he destroyed his logs, war diary, signal books and navigation charts. He then laid six or seven explosive charges in preparation for destroying his boat.

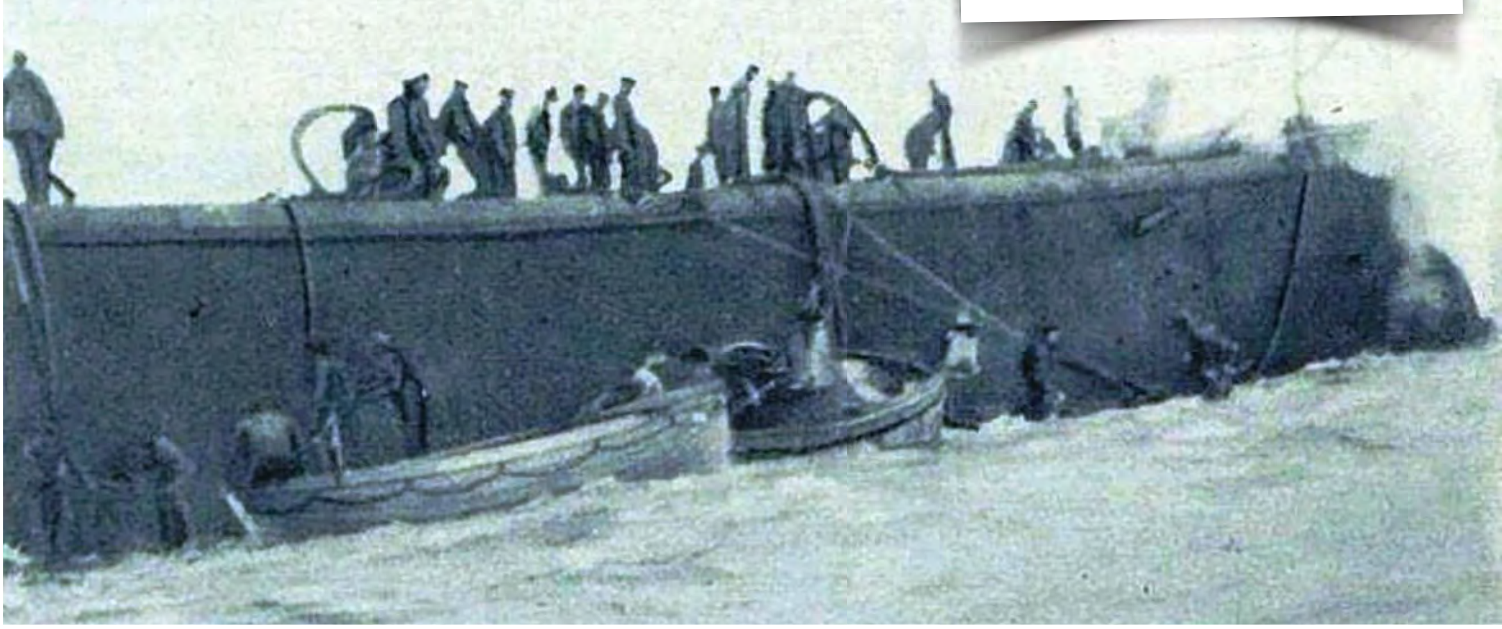
Having done all he felt he could, Mohrbutter ordered his crew to go on deck. What happened next was that a section of the Royal Navy's Harwich Submarine Flotilla was on a torpedo training exercise when one of the flotilla's tenders, the Acheron-class destroyer HMS *Firedrake*, spotted something in the distance on the Shipwash Shoal (also referred to as Shipwash Sand in some accounts). The captain of HMS *Firedrake*, Commander Aubrey Thomas Tillard, decided to investigate.

A contemporaneous report described the events that followed: 'The 'Firedrake' approached her, the German crew were seen to be standing on her upper deck, which was awash, and holding up their hands. When the destroyer got still nearer, the Germans jumped into the water and were soon picked up by the destroyer's boats, which had been lowered for the purpose. It was thought that all the men had been brought on board the 'Firedrake', when a man was observed to hurry up to the submarine's deck from below. He shouted and waved his hands frantically, and then jumped overboard. He was picked up and brought off, but volunteered no information as to what he had been doing before he had left his ship.'

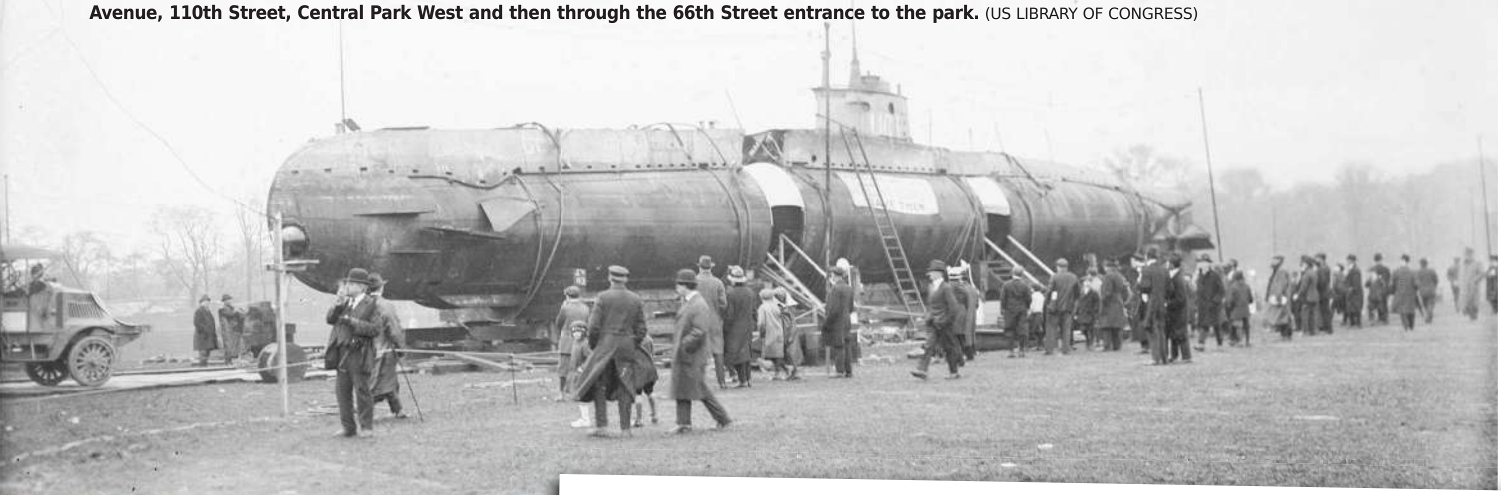
BELOW: Naval personnel during the initial work to recover *UC-5* on the Shipwash Shoal. Note the gratings over the mine chambers.
(HISTORIC MILITARY PRESS)



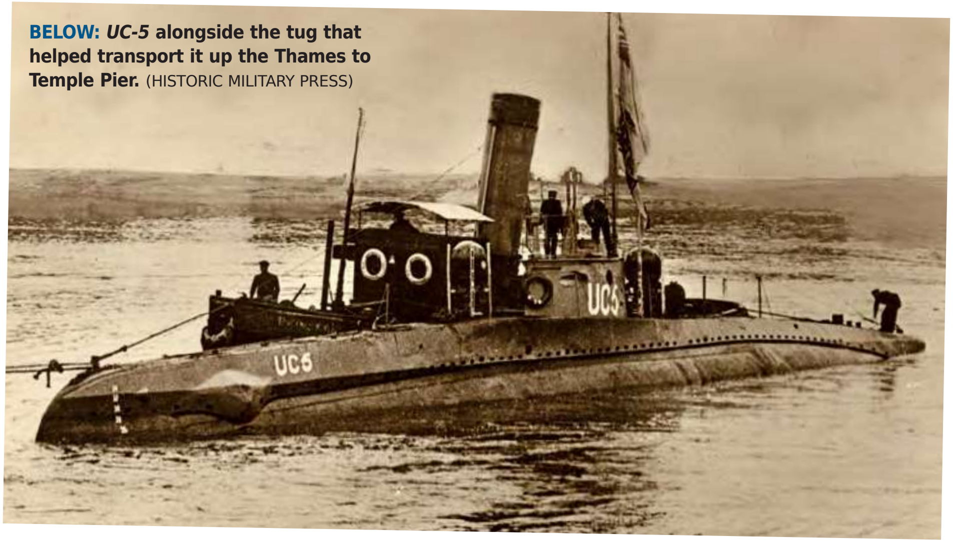
BELOW: *UC-5* alongside one of the salvage lighters deployed by Commodore Young RNR of the Admiralty Salvage Department.
(HISTORIC MILITARY PRESS)



BELOW: **The somewhat unusual sight that greeted New Yorkers at the end of October 1917 – the three sections of the Type UC mine-laying submarine *UC-5*, captured by the Royal Navy in April the same year, being reassembled in Central Park. To reach the park, the three parts of the submarine were paraded through the city, heading from the dock at 132nd Street to Manhattan Street, then on 125th Street, Seventh Avenue, 110th Street, Central Park West and then through the 66th Street entrance to the park.** (US LIBRARY OF CONGRESS)



BELOW: ***UC-5* alongside the tug that helped transport it up the Thames to Temple Pier.** (HISTORIC MILITARY PRESS)



Exactly what this man had been doing became abundantly clear a few moments later when seven explosions of differing strength were heard and bits of bedding and other articles and volumes of brown smoke were seen to be pouring out of the U-boat's conning-tower. *Oberleutnant* Mohrbutter had ordered *UC-5*'s demolition charges to be fired. However, despite the explosive charges and the extensive damage done by the crew, *UC-5* was still largely intact.

This was the first German submarine that had been captured. Understandably, the Admiralty was very anxious to salvage *UC-5*. A salvage officer and divers were duly sent from Harwich to carry out the preliminary work and prepare the captured U-boat as far as possible for the next stage of the recovery operation. This was to be overseen by Commodore Young RNR of the Admiralty Salvage Department.

The remaining mines in *UC-5*'s cargo still presented a serious danger. The upper mines were rendered safe by the removal of the acid tubes from the horns but it was impossible to do this with the lower mines, so they remained active. Despite the danger that the latter presented, the recovery began. In the time that had been lost *UC-5* had sunk deeper into the quicksand of the Shipwash and the Harwich salvage equipment was not powerful enough to pull the submarine free. So *UC-5* was lashed to a lighter with a six-and-a-half-inch wire passed round her in four areas at low tide. As the tide rose the lighter pulled the wreck slowly from the sand, but then the wires broke, and back the submarine fell to the sea bottom.

For the next attempt, a nine-inch wire. Again at low tide the wreck was secured to a lighter, though a larger vessel was used this time that was capable of lifting 500 tons. The lighter's near tanks were then emptied, and her outer tanks were filled with water, which acted as a counterweight. This time Young's scheme worked and *UC-5* was raised and taken off safely.

Seventeen days after she was seized by the Royal Navy, *UC-5* was towed into Harwich harbour and placed in a dry dock for inspection.

The propaganda effect of having salvaged the captured U-boat was not lost on the authorities. Once the Royal Navy had finished its work, and everything that could be had been gleaned from *UC-5*, the decision was taken to place it on public display. For this reason, *UC-5* was taken up the Thames to London's Temple Pier lashed to the tug *Princess* and towed by the tug *Bruno*. Arriving on Monday, 24 July 1916, it was officially paraded before the British people two days later.

The numbers who arrived to see the captured submarine on the first public viewing day were staggering, as one account describes: 'By midday it was stated that people were passing the turnstiles at the rate of about 1,200 an hour, and as the stream did not slacken for a moment until the closing hour of 9 o'clock the day's total was probably well over 10,000.'

It was originally intended that *UC-5* would remain on display at Temple Pier for two weeks. Such was the demand for viewings, however, that this was extended by a further seven days. Following this, the submarine was cut into three sections, transported across the Atlantic and, by the end of October, had been resembled in New York's Central Park.

On the 25th of the month she was the subject of another official unveiling. It was in Central Park that *UC-5* ended its final, and longest, voyage, eventually being considered surplus to requirements and scrapped. ●

ABOVE: **The White Ensign flies over the German ensign on *UC-5* before it was put on public display in London.** (US LIBRARY OF CONGRESS)

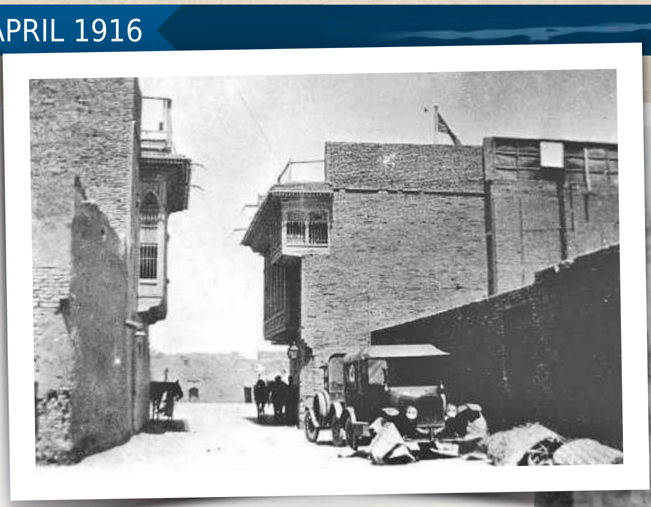
THE FALL OF KUT

29 APRIL 1916

THEY HAD tried. Every attempt to break through the Ottoman forces to reach the beleaguered garrison at Kut Al Amara had failed with heavy casualties. None of the relief efforts had been undertaken with sufficient force to be able to defeat the usually well-entrenched Turks, and Major General Sir Charles Townsend was faced with the prospect of either seeing the men of his garrison starve to death or of a humiliating surrender.

Why the relief efforts had failed was explained by Major General Maude: 'The local difficulties, the long line of communications, the water transport (or rather the lack of it), the menace from floods and rains, the barrenness of the country – all these factors rendered the most careful organisation and liberal expenditure necessary as a preliminary to success. The obstacles in our way were enormous.'

On 10 April Townsend issued a communiqué to his troops explaining the situation. After informing them that the latest relief effort had been halted, he wrote that 'I am compelled, therefore, to appeal to you all to make a determined effort to eke out our scanty means ... I have then to reduce the rations to five ounces of meal for all ranks, British and Indian. In this way I can hold out till April 21st if it became necessary ... I told you that your duty stood out plain and simple; it was to stand here and hold up the Turkish Advance on the Tigris ... and I expressed the hope that you would make this defence to be remembered in history as a glorious one.'

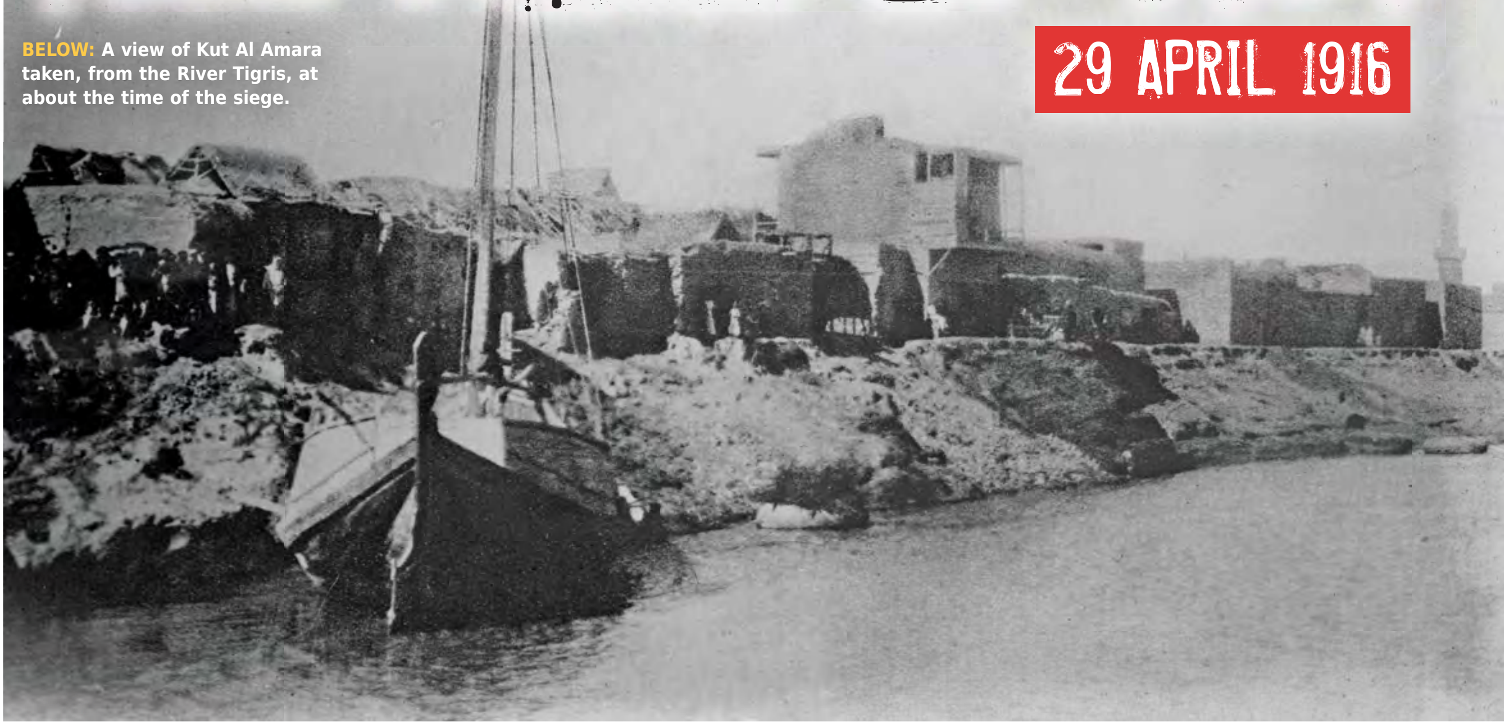


ABOVE: **General Townsend's headquarters in Kut.**

The men had indeed suffered nobly in ever-worsening conditions, as the 6th Division's senior medical officer, Colonel P. Hehir, had remarked three days earlier: 'There is a vast amount of suffering from hunger amongst the troops, which is being borne with admirable patience and fortitude and arouses enthusiastic praise at the pluck and grit displayed by both our British and Indian soldiers. As one is amongst the men daily and speaks with intimate knowledge of the conditions, the behaviour of the men in meeting these unfortunate conditions is heroic.'

ABOVE: **General Townsend was the Commander of the British forces at Kut Al Amara.** (COURTESY OF THE AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL; H12369)

Heroic or glorious the persistence of the garrison may have been, the end was soon approaching and it would be an ignominious one. Having failed to relieve Kut by force of arms, an attempt was made to buy, or bribe, the Turks to let the garrison walk away. This scheme was put forward by Townsend and was approved by Lord Kitchener and the British Cabinet.



BELOW: **A view of Kut Al Amara taken, from the River Tigris, at about the time of the siege.**

Townsend's first offer was to give the Turks one million pounds sterling plus forty artillery pieces to release the garrison. Quite how so much money could be raised in Mesopotamia or even India was not certain. Nor was it made clear whether the money was for the Turkish officers to share out or destined for their government. In any case the offer was rejected by Enver Pasha who said that Turkey did not need the cash and that the siege had cost him 10,000 men whose lives were worth more than money. There was also opposition to such a gesture from Sir Percy Cox, the Indian Government's political agent in Mesopotamia who refused to have anything to do with the project, saying that it diminished Britain's standing in the area.

RIGHT: **As the fighting continued, the Turkish soldiers established a reputation for themselves as fierce fighters.** (US LIBRARY OF CONGRESS)

ABOVE: **British graves in Kut. The town was re-occupied by Commonwealth forces in February 1917 and at the end of June that year it became an administrative, railway and hospital centre. Kut War Cemetery was made by the 6th (Poona) Division between October 1915 and May 1916 and was increased in size when graves were brought in from other sites after the Armistice. The cemetery now contains 420 First World War burials.**

A second offer of two million pounds met the same response, and indicated just how desperate the situation had become in Kut. Enver Pasha's rejection was followed by a demand for the garrison's unconditional surrender. Townsend was given permission from London to open negotiations with the Turks, as he explained to his men in another communiqué: 'I was ordered to open negotiations for the surrender of Kut, in the words of the Army Commander, "The onus not lying on yourself. You are in the position of having conducted a gallant and successful defence, and you will be in a position to get better terms than any emissary of ours."' Townsend then wrote optimistically that 'Negotiations are still in progress, but I hope to be able to announce your departure for India on parole not to serve against the Turks.'

ABOVE: **Enver Pasha, pictured here at the start of the First World War, turned down the British offer of payment for the lifting of the siege.** (US LIBRARY OF CONGRESS)

The offers of money, though, had served only to demonstrate Townsend's weakness and the Turkish commander continued to insist on unconditional surrender. At 11.00 hours on 29 April, the following message was received at British headquarters from Townsend: 'I have destroyed my guns and most of my ammunition is being destroyed. Officers have gone to Khalil Pasha, the Turkish commander-in-chief, who is at Madug, to say that I am ready to surrender. I must have some food here and cannot hold out any longer. Khalil has been told today, and a deputation of officers has gone to his launch to bring food from the *Julnar*, the ship sent by the relief force on the night of April 24 to carry supplies to the garrison of Kut.'

Another message was received shortly afterwards: 'I have hoisted the white flag over Kut Fort and town, and the guards will be taken over by a Turkish regiment which is approaching.' It was the last message from Kut.

Townsend and his men had resisted for 143 days. Their stubborn defence had considerably assisted the Russian forces in the Caucasus by keeping Turkish troops on the Mesopotamian Front which might otherwise have been diverted to Erzerum and Trebizond. Strangely, rather than press home the advantages gained by the defeat of the relieving forces and the fall of the city by attacking the British forces in Mesopotamia, the Turks actually fell back from Kut towards Baghdad. The result of the capitulation of Kut was stalemate, much as it had been through the course of the siege. Neither side was in a position to make any further movement; the Turks because they dared not, and the British because they could not.

A total of 13,309 men surrendered. During the siege 1,025 had died from enemy action and 721 from disease. The efforts to relieve Kut had cost the British and Indian regiments almost 23,000 killed or wounded, whereas Turkish losses amounted to less than half that number. Townsend's men were interred in Aleppo where the majority of them died through starvation or ill-treatment. Theirs was a passing glory. ●

BRITISH PRISONERS OF WAR

TOP: British PoWs in a camp near Parchim, a town in Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania, Germany. (HISTORIC MILITARY PRESS)

THE CAPITULATION of Kut resulted in large numbers of troops being captured by the enemy. This total prompted a much wider, and more general, debate about British prisoners of war in enemy hands.

On 4 May 1916, the Under-Secretary of State for War was asked if he would provide the latest information 'in possession of the War Office' as to the number of British and Colonial prisoners held by the Central Powers. It was stated that the Germans were holding 26,800 PoWs, the Turks 9,796, the Bulgarians 449 and the Austro-Hungarians just two men. However, the total held by the Turks was not correct.

Also on 4 May 1916, Lord Kitchener had stated that what he termed the 'gallant garrison' at Kut had 'consisted of 2,970 British and some 6,000 Indian troops'. This figure was soon revised. By the end of the year, continuing enquiries had been made regarding British and Commonwealth men held by the enemy. On 14 November 1916, James Hope, the Treasurer of the Household, reported that 'from every hostile Government, except the Turkish, we have been able to obtain satisfactory lists of prisoners of war; but notwithstanding all our efforts and those of the American Embassy at Constantinople, we have failed to obtain any but the most incomplete lists of our officers and men in Turkish hands. Apart from those who were taken prisoners in the Gallipoli operations, some 12,530, including, of course, Indian prisoners, we believe, surrendered at Kut-el-Amara, but by means of information received up to the present from the Turkish Government we have been able to identify only 1,923; and to this must be added another 764, of whom we have heard by means of private letters and other unofficial communications.'

There was a great deal of concern in parliament for the welfare of these men: 'In all other hostile countries prisoners of war camps have been visited by members of the American Embassy concerned, but a similar concession has always been strenuously opposed by the Turks. It is, therefore, impossible to give any assured information regarding our subjects in Turkey, but from all we can learn we have reason to fear that the conditions are very far from satisfactory, and that the mortality in certain cases has been heavy. There are also indications that our men have suffered severely on their way from Kut to places of internment. Moreover, we have grounds for fearing that our men are short of clothing.'

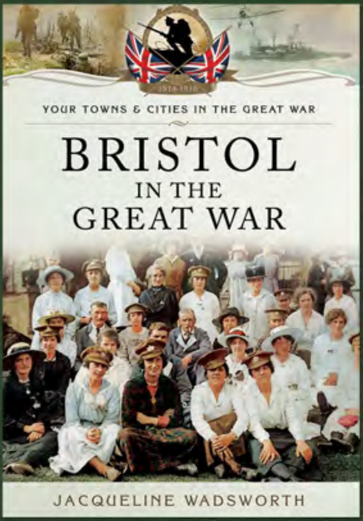
Mr Hope was also able to update the numbers of British and Commonwealth PoWs held by the Germans – the number of which no doubt had swelled as a result of the fighting on the Somme. Hope revealed that the Germans were holding 1,027 officers and 28,737 other ranks – a total of 29,764. Naval prisoners, including those serving with the Royal Naval Division, amounted to fifty-two officers and 1,285 other ranks. Altogether, 31,101 men were being held in German camps.

By way of comparison, the figures for the number of German military prisoners of war in British hands, 'according to the latest Returns', was also provided. Some 833 army officers were in British camps, along with 42,082 other ranks, 133 navy officers and 1,982 naval other ranks – a total of 45,030 men. ●

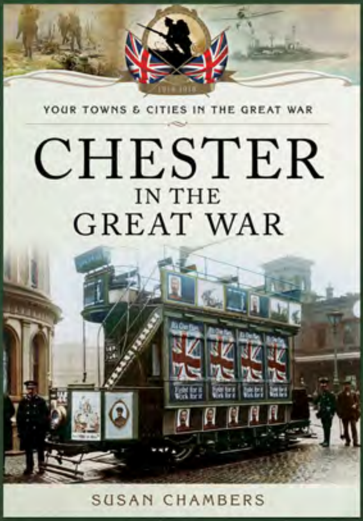
ABOVE: Two British soldiers being held in the camp at Döberitz. According to the original caption, both were aged 16 years or under. (US LIBRARY OF CONGRESS)

LEFT: British and French prisoners of war sorting mail at a camp in Germany. (US LIBRARY OF CONGRESS)

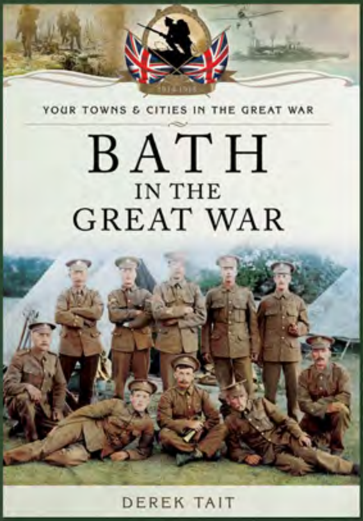
PEN & SWORD BOOKS


YOUR TOWNS & CITIES IN THE GREAT WAR
BRISTOL IN THE GREAT WAR
JACQUELINE WADSWORTH

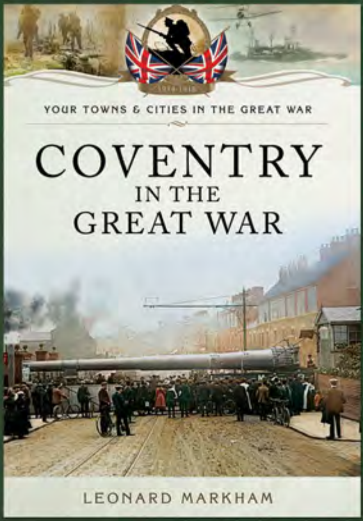
WAS £12.99 NOW £10.39


YOUR TOWNS & CITIES IN THE GREAT WAR
CHESTER IN THE GREAT WAR
SUSAN CHAMBERS

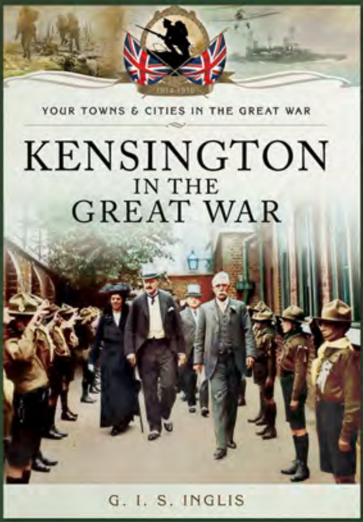
WAS £12.99 NOW £10.39


YOUR TOWNS & CITIES IN THE GREAT WAR
BATH IN THE GREAT WAR
DEREK TAIT

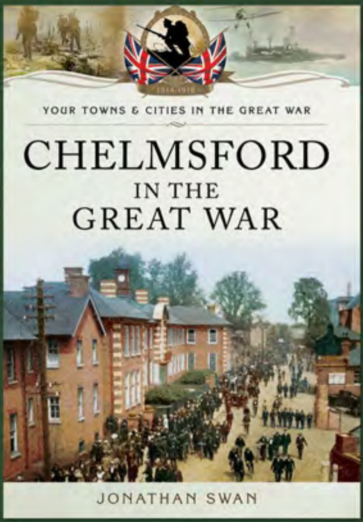
WAS £9.99 NOW £7.99


YOUR TOWNS & CITIES IN THE GREAT WAR
COVENTRY IN THE GREAT WAR
LEONARD MARKHAM

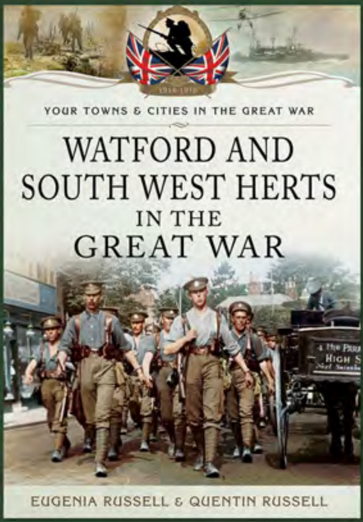
WAS £9.99 NOW £7.99


YOUR TOWNS & CITIES IN THE GREAT WAR
KENSINGTON IN THE GREAT WAR
G. I. S. INGLIS

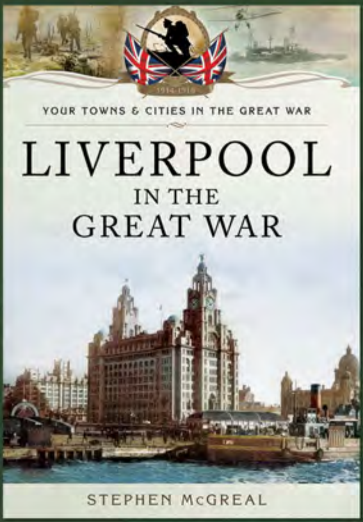
WAS £12.99 NOW £10.39


YOUR TOWNS & CITIES IN THE GREAT WAR
CHELMSFORD IN THE GREAT WAR
JONATHAN SWAN

WAS £12.99 NOW £10.39


YOUR TOWNS & CITIES IN THE GREAT WAR
WATFORD AND SOUTH WEST HERTS IN THE GREAT WAR
EUGENIA RUSSELL & QUENTIN RUSSELL

WAS £12.99 NOW £10.39


YOUR TOWNS & CITIES IN THE GREAT WAR
LIVERPOOL IN THE GREAT WAR
STEPHEN McGREAL

WAS £12.99 NOW £10.39

Quote “249118” to receive your discount

Visit **www.pen-and-sword.co.uk** to view our full range of titles

Pen & Sword Books LTD, 47
Church Street, Barnsley, S70 2AS
TEL: 01226 734222
UK Postage £4.00 • Airmail £8.00

FORMATION OF THE AIR BOARD

BY 1916 the lack of co-ordination between the Royal Flying Corps and the Royal Naval Air Service had led to serious problems, not only in the procurement of items such as aircraft engines, but also in the air defence of Great Britain as a whole.

At a meeting of the War Committee on 15 February 1916, it was decided to establish a standing joint naval and military committee to co-ordinate both the design and the supply of materiel for the two air services. This body, whose chairman was Lordy Derby, was titled the Joint War Air Committee.

Whilst the idea was sound, the reality was riddled with difficulties. As the Joint War Air Committee had not been given any executive powers, it struggled to fulfil its intended role and quickly proved to be ineffective. So disillusioned did Lord Derby become that after just eight meetings he resigned. 'It appears to me quite impossible to bring the two wings closer together,' he complained, 'unless and until the whole system of the Air Service is changed and they are amalgamated into one service'.

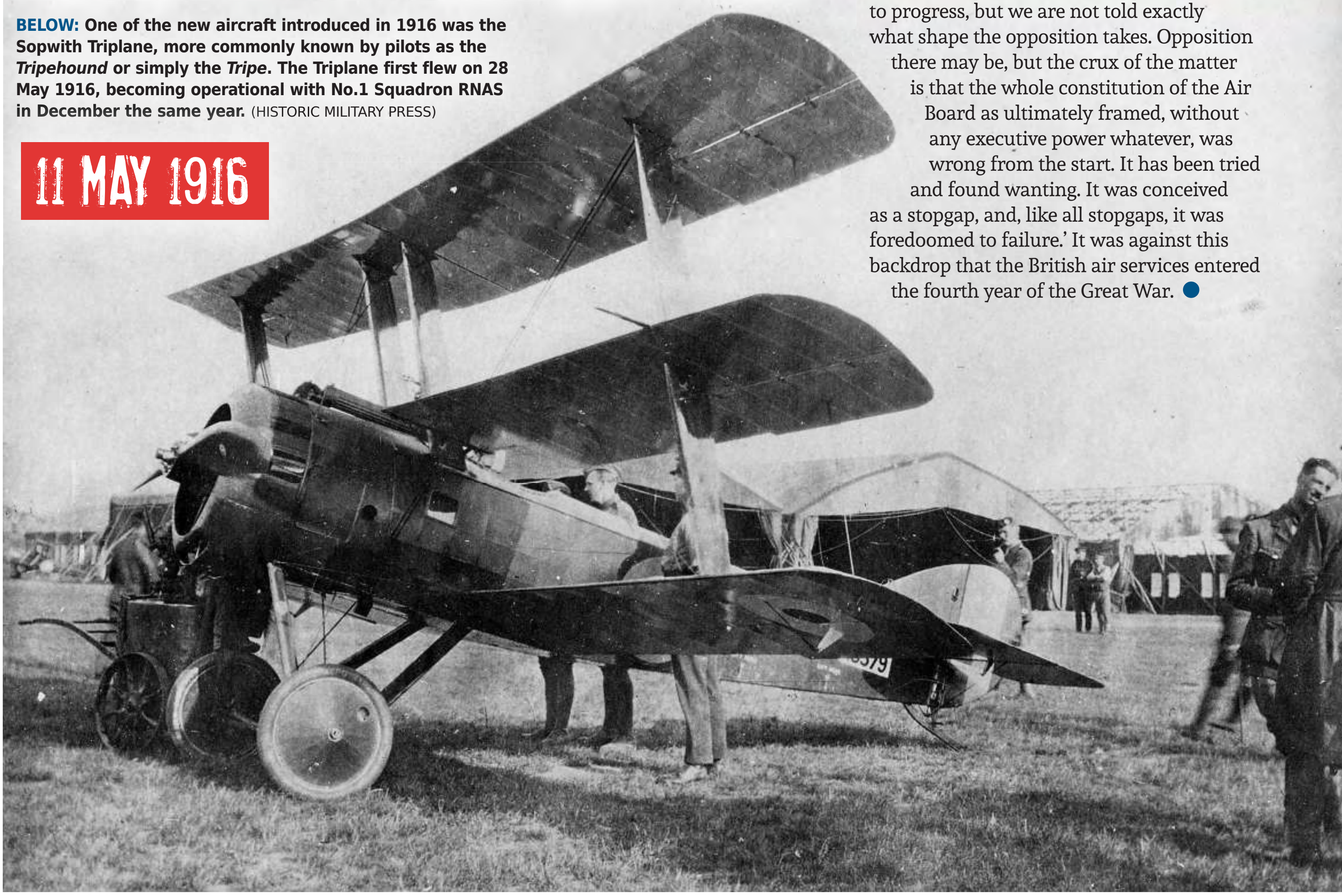
The next attempt to establish effective co-ordination between the RFC and RNAS was the creation of an Air Board. It came into being on 11 May 1916, with Lord Curzon as its chairman. The inclusion of Curzon, a Cabinet Minister, and other political figures, was intended to give the Air Board greater status than its predecessor. The main roles of the Board included discussing matters of general policy in relation to the air, and in particular combined operations of the naval and military air services; making recommendations on the types of machine required (if either the Admiralty or the War Office declined to act on recommendations of the Board, the President was to refer questions to the War Committee Cabinet); organising and co-ordinating the supply of material and thereby preventing competition between the two departments; and organising a complete system for the interchange of ideas and technology between the two services.

In October 1916 the Air Board published a report which was highly critical of the arrangements within the British air services. The report noted that although the Army authorities were ready and willing to provide information and take part in meetings, the Navy was often absent from Board meetings and frequently refused to provide information on naval aviation.

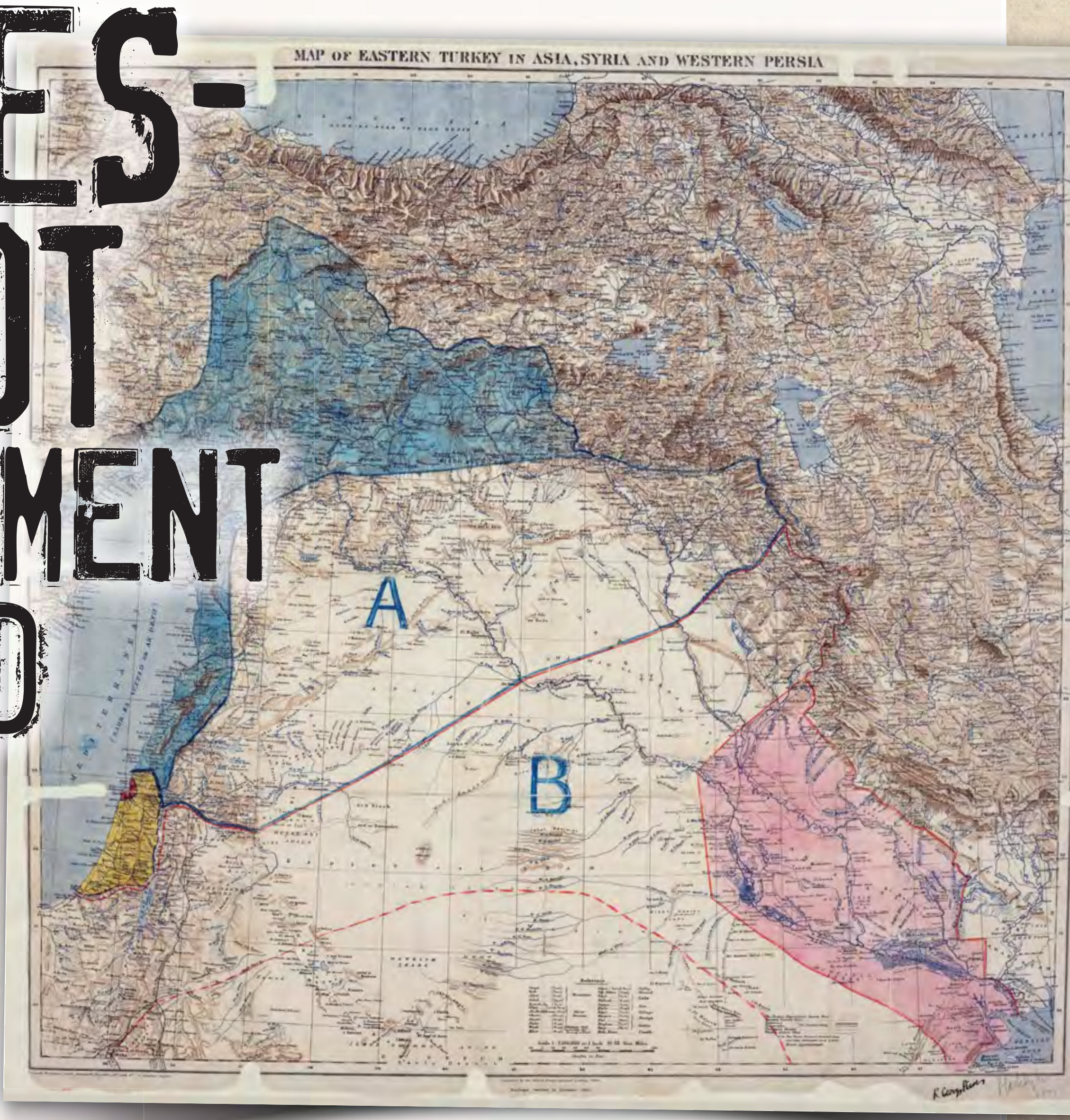
The situation was apparent to those outside of the government and authorities. 'The Air Board stands confessedly a failure,' declared the editor of *Flight* on 2 November 1916. 'We have heard a great deal recently about the impossibility of the Admiralty attitude towards the Board, and it is on the shoulders of the Admiralty that the major portion of the blame for the Board's failure is placed by the critics who stand outside and comment from a standpoint which necessarily is one of insufficient premises. Vaguely we hear rumours that the Admiralty blocks the way to progress, but we are not told exactly what shape the opposition takes. Opposition there may be, but the crux of the matter is that the whole constitution of the Air Board as ultimately framed, without any executive power whatever, was wrong from the start. It has been tried and found wanting. It was conceived as a stopgap, and, like all stopgaps, it was foredoomed to failure.' It was against this backdrop that the British air services entered the fourth year of the Great War. ●

BELOW: **One of the new aircraft introduced in 1916 was the Sopwith Triplane, more commonly known by pilots as the *Tripehound* or simply the *Tripe*. The Triplane first flew on 28 May 1916, becoming operational with No.1 Squadron RNAS in December the same year.** (HISTORIC MILITARY PRESS)

11 MAY 1916



SYKES-PICOT AGREEMENT SIGNED



ABOVE: The so-called Sykes-Picot Agreement Map. It was an enclosure in a letter sent to Sir Edward Grey on 9 May 1916. The blue shaded area at the top of the map is territory that, under the agreement, would be under direct French rule. The areas marked 'A' and 'B' were to be independent Arab states under French and British control respectively. The yellow area bottom left was to be Palestine, which would be protected by the British, whilst the pink area on the right would be under direct British rule.

16 MAY 1916

THE MIDDLE East has long been a hotbed of cultural and religious tension dating back to pre-Roman times, and continuing through the Crusades. The Turkish Ottoman Empire, during its long domination of that part of the world, had also experienced difficulties controlling that turbulent region and its entry into the war on behalf of the Central Powers in November 1914 offered the Arabs a chance to break away from the Turks, and for Britain the prospect of an ally in the very midst of the enemy.

That was all well and good, but at some point the war would end if the Turks were defeated and what, or whom, would fill the inevitable vacuum? The subject of the shape of the post-war Middle East was the subject of prolonged discussions between France, the UK and Russia. These talks, which began in November 1915, culminated in an agreement which carved up the Middle East into three spheres of interest. The Arabs may have thought they were going to fight for freedom, but in reality they would merely be exchanging rule from Constantinople for that from London, Paris and St Petersburg.

The agreement that was eventually reached between the Triple Entente included a contentious clause allowing for the establishment of a Jewish homeland. The Jewish Question had long troubled the governments of Europe and had led in the early 1900s to a proposal to resettle the Jews in British East Africa, where territory would be handed over to the Zionists. To investigate the practicality of what became known as the Uganda Scheme, leading Zionists visited the area. Many saw it as a safe haven for the Jews who were being slaughtered in repeated 'progroms' in Russia. The offer was turned down by the Jews who said that if they accepted a settlement in Uganda, it would mean they could never establish a homeland back in Palestine.

The possible defeat of the Turks, and the stated British war aim of the dismemberment of the Ottoman Empire, meant that a solution to the Jewish Question could finally be found back in the land the Jews had originally occupied. Whilst this was exactly what the Zionists wanted, it would be fiercely contested by the Arabs. The plan did allow for an area of land in the British and French sectors to be formed into an independent Arab State or Confederation of Arab States. But much of this was largely sparsely-populated desert.

Whilst the war was continuing and the Arab revolt had to be encouraged the agreement had to be kept a secret. As the terms were negotiated by the French diplomat François Marie Denis Georges-Picot and the British politician Colonel Sir Mark Sykes, the agreement, which was finalised on 16 May 1916, became known as the Sykes-Picot Agreement or, officially at least, the Asia Minor Agreement.

Perhaps inevitably the agreement did not stay secret for long. When Russia withdrew from the Triple Entente the new Communist government published the terms of the agreement, much to the embarrassment of Britain and France and the anger of the Arabs. Today one of the stated goals of, ISIL, the self-proclaimed Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant, is to reverse the effects of the Sykes–Picot Agreement. ●

BRITISH SUMMER TIME INTRODUCED

21 MAY 1916

RIGHT: One of the most significant social changes of the First World War was the introduction of large numbers of women to the workplace. It has been stated that female munitions workers, the 'munitionettes', produced 80% of the weapons and shells used by the British Army between 1914 and 1918.

BY 1916 there were few aspects of life in wartime Britain that did not come under scrutiny. Anything that might be beneficial to the nation's war effort was to be examined further. Consequently, during the sitting of the House of Commons on 8 May 1916, Sir Henry Norman MP tabled the following motion: 'That, in view especially of the economy in fuel and its transport that would be effected by shortening the hours of artificial lighting, this House would welcome a measure for the advancement of clock time by one hour during the summer months of this year.'

The following day the Home Secretary wrote to Norman. In his letter, Herbert Samuel made the following comments: 'The Government cannot be indifferent to the fact that the advancement of clock time by one hour throughout the country during the summer months will lessen by an hour a day the time of artificial lighting, with a consequent large saving in the expenditure on fuel for lighting purposes. How large the saving would be is difficult to estimate, but it would certainly be very considerable ... Further, the committee of the general managers of the great railways, which is now administering the railway system on behalf of the Government, inform me that, for reasons relating to railway management, it is strongly in favour of the proposal.'

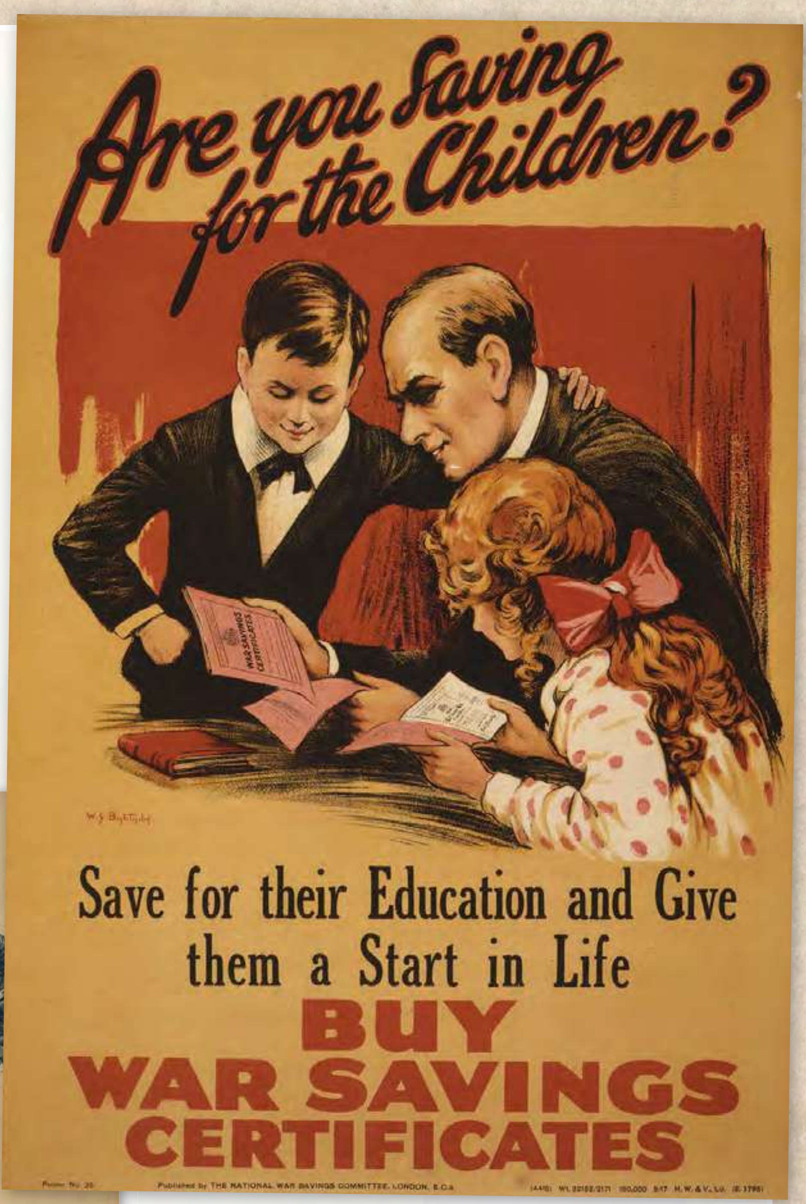
The British government was not the first to look at a possible Daylight Savings Bill. The Central Powers, in the form of Germany and the Austro-Hungarians, had acted first, having already adopted a policy of putting their clocks forward to increase factory time.

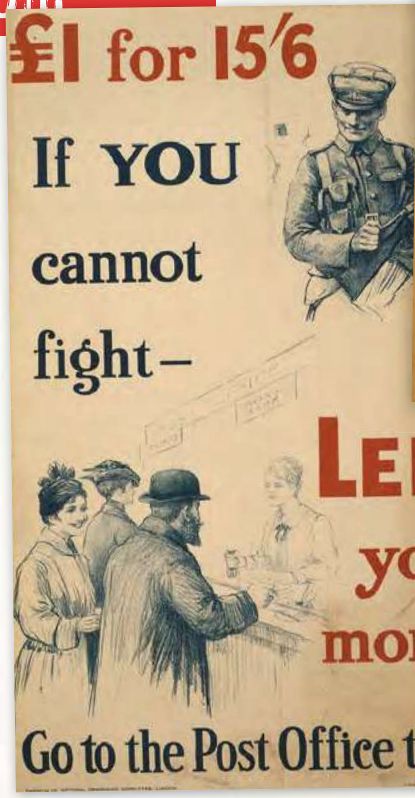
It would seem that the savings to be made in Britain by such a proposal were not insubstantial. 'Evidence was given that the London County Council tramways would save £10,000 a year,' noted Norman. 'The general manager of the London and North-Western Railway Company stated that the railways would save £92,000 a year. The chairman of the Sheffield Gas Company said that the people of Sheffield would save £12,000 on their gas during the summer months. A very careful and detailed estimate was made according to which the savings of our whole country would be £2,500,000.'

Even though there were many in the UK against the idea, as the debate on daylight saving gathered momentum, Norman explained how his plan would work: 'The proposal before us is on Saturday night at the beginning of summer to advance the hour-hand of the clock by one hour, and on another Saturday night at the end of the summer to put it back again – that is, we should add one hour of daylight to our working time, and correspondingly transfer one hour of darkness to our sleeping time. That is, it would be as light at 9.30 at night as it is now at 8.30. Actually it would be done in this way, if the House sees fit to accept this Motion and the Government act on it: Next Sunday morning, or the Sunday morning after it – the method and time depend entirely on the Government – all public clocks, all railway and all post-office clocks when they reach 1 a.m. will be moved to 2 a.m., and when we wind our watches on going to bed we shall similarly advance them one hour.' This is exactly what happened in the early hours of Sunday, 21 May 1916 – a practice that has continued every year since. ●

ABOVE: A reduction in the UK's consumption of coal was one of the main aims of the proposal to introduce British Summer Time in 1916. Here female coalheavers are pictured at work in London in 1916.

THE DAILY COST OF THE WAR


Are you Saving for the Children?
WAR SAVINGS CERTIFICATES
Save for their Education and Give them a Start in Life
BUY WAR SAVINGS CERTIFICATES
Published by THE NATIONAL WAR SAVINGS COMMITTEE, LONDON, E.C.4



RIGHT & BELOW: **Two posters, each with a different message, urging members of the public to purchase War Savings Certificates.**
(BOTH US LIBRARY OF CONGRESS)

23 MAY 1916

THE SHEER scale of the fighting in the First World War meant that enormous sums of money were required to fund the cost of armaments, transport and other war requirements. At the same time, Britain not only had to finance her own war effort but also subsidised those of her allies.

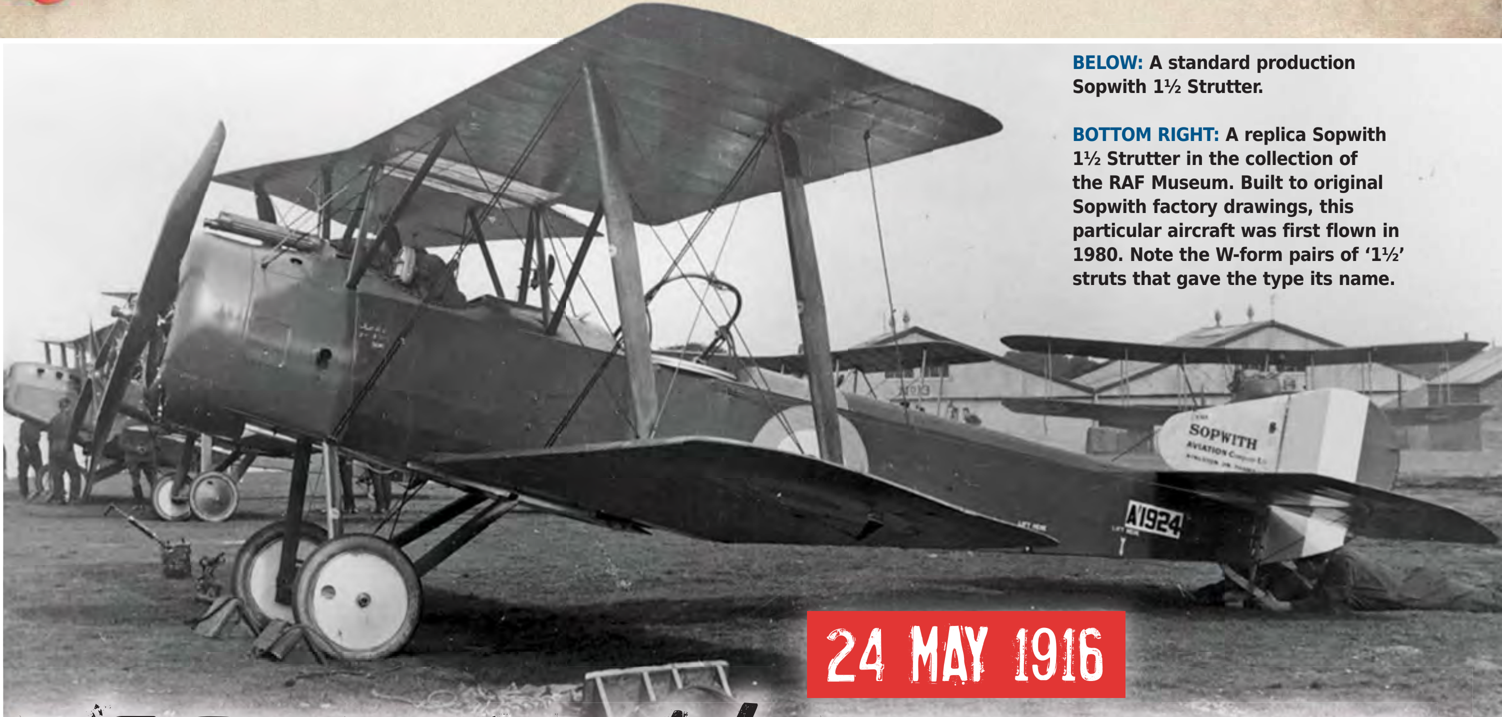
As costs continued to rise month by month, in September 1915 an emergency budget introduced new taxes. There was to be a 50% tax on excess profits and also on some luxury goods; a 40% increase in income tax, postal charges, and on some imports such as tobacco and petrol. Further increases on some items came in the budget of April 1916. These included new taxes on matches, amusements and mineral water; a further rise in income tax; and increased taxes on sugar, cocoa, coffee and motor-cars by 50 to 60%. In July of that year interest rates rose to 6%. And yet the budget deficit continued to grow.

On 23 May 1916, the Prime Minister, Herbert Asquith, made an announcement detailing just how bad the UK's debt situation was becoming: 'Comparing our experience of the present financial year, so far as it has gone, with the year which closed on 31st March, the highest average expenditure for any considerable period in the last financial year was between £4,300,000 and £4,400,000 per day, whereas in the fifty days which have passed since 1st April we have reached £4,820,000 a day.' Today, such a sum would be in the order of a staggering £210,000,000 per day!

Asquith went on to detail 'under what heads the expenditure has taken place': 'I am dealing now with the period 1st April to 20th May [1916]. The first and, of course, the largest item is in respect of the Army, Navy, and munitions – £149,000,000. The second item, loans to Allies and Dominions, amounts to £74,500,000, or half the amount expended upon the Army, Navy, and munitions. The third is for food supplies, railways, and miscellaneous items, in regard to some of which it is not desirable at the moment to state precisely what they are. The total amount under that head is £17,500,000, making a total of £241,000,000.

The Government needed to raise funds, and one of the steps it took in June 1916 was the introduction of the War Savings Certificate. Under the scheme, which was aimed at private individuals (though charities and provident societies could participate with special permission), a saver could purchase a maximum holding of £500 from a local war savings association, the post office or a bank.

A £1 certificate cost 15s 6d to buy and could be redeemed, free of income tax, five years later. For small investors, the guaranteed £1 for every 15s 6d spent represented a healthy return of 29% over the period in question. Lending to the government was the most secure investment anyone could hope for – assuming the Allies won the war of course – and it also had the appeal of being a contribution to the nation's war effort. ●



BELOW: A standard production Sopwith 1½ Strutter.

BOTTOM RIGHT: A replica Sopwith 1½ Strutter in the collection of the RAF Museum. Built to original Sopwith factory drawings, this particular aircraft was first flown in 1980. Note the W-form pairs of '1½' struts that gave the type its name.

24 MAY 1916

SOPWITH 1½ STRUTTER ARRIVES IN FRANCE

THE FIRST Sopwith 1½ Strutter two-seat fighters arrived in France on 24 May 1916 – these four aircraft forming No.70 Squadron's 'A' Flight. This was an important moment in the development of the Royal Flying Corps as the 1½ Strutter was the first British aeroplane to enter front line service equipped with interrupter gear, allowing a machine-gun to fire through the propeller arc (it also had a Lewis gun mounted in the rear cockpit) as well as being the first British-designed two seater tractor fighter (i.e. with the propeller at the front to 'pull' the aircraft).

The Strutter, as it was commonly referred to, was passed by Sopwith's experimental department on 12 December 1915. Although the airframe was a more robust improvement on its predecessors, the design also marked the introduction of pivoting surfaces that could be moved upward against slipstream – in effect an early dive brake. There was also a tailplane on which the incidence could be adjusted by the pilot, via a control in the cockpit, during flight.

One correspondent, writing in *Flight* magazine, stated: 'Just as the originators of the names of the [Sopwith] Pup and Camel have remained anonymous, so has the inventor of the name of the 1½-Strutter; but there is no doubt that the aircraft owed its odd title to the wing bracing. The outer struts of the central structure were regarded as interplane struts which had to be attached to the upper longerons because they were not long enough to reach the lower wing. The name 1½-Strutter was, of course, unofficial – indeed, it might almost be said that the 1½-Strutter founded a kind of tradition by which Sopwith aircraft acquired facetious names which were at first frowned upon officially but became so widely used that they had ultimately to be accepted.

'In the 1½-Strutter the Sopwith company provided a two-seater with a performance comparable with that of contemporary scouts, and effectively armed with machine-guns fore and aft. It was the first true two-seat fighter to see service, the pioneer of a category of military aircraft which included such magnificent machines as the Bristol Fighter and the Hawker two-seaters. And yet the 1½-Strutter is not one of the best-known aircraft of the 1914-18 war. A possible reason for its relative obscurity is that it was so closely followed by the Bristol Fighter that it may have been somewhat overshadowed by that great aeroplane. Another reason is that the War Office were unpardonably slow to order [it].'

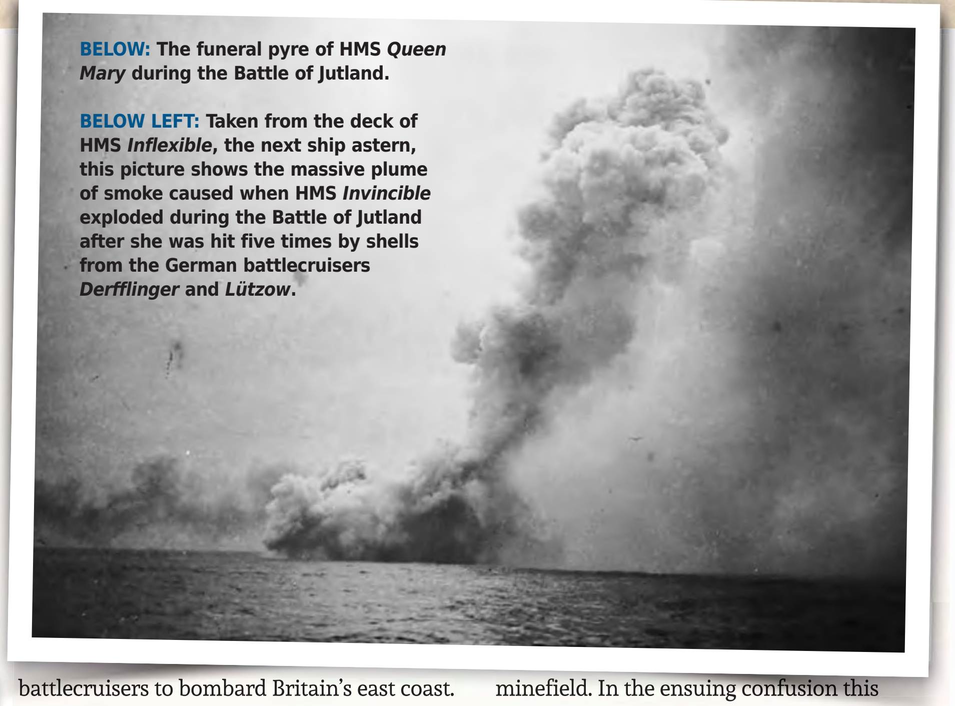
Indeed, the first orders for the Strutter came from the Royal Naval Air Service, to whom deliveries commenced in February 1916. The Royal Flying Corps eventually followed suit. The type acquitted itself well, soon acquiring a jack-of-all-trades reputation. The Strutter initially functioned as an escort fighter and enjoyed considerable success in that role.

Soon after its arrival on the Western Front, the Strutter was involved in another innovation in aerial warfare. At about 13.30 hours on 2 August 1916, 'ten bomb-laden Caudron G.IVs and one Farman F.40 of Nos. 4 and 5 Wings, R.N.A.S., arrived over the enemy aerodrome at St. Denis Westrem. Their bombing was controlled by the pilot of a 1½-Strutter, who flew independently of the main formation; this was a new departure in bombing technique. In response to the Sopwith's Very light signals the bombers changed formation from their wide vic to line astern. They bombed in succession, then reformed for their homeward journey.'

Also in 1916, No.3 Wing of the Royal Naval Air Service, equipped with Sopwith 1½ Strutters, became the first British formation tasked with strategic bombing. ●

THE BATTLE OF JUTLAND

31 MAY 1916



BELOW: The funeral pyre of HMS *Queen Mary* during the Battle of Jutland.

BELOW LEFT: Taken from the deck of HMS *Inflexible*, the next ship astern, this picture shows the massive plume of smoke caused when HMS *Invincible* exploded during the Battle of Jutland after she was hit five times by shells from the German battlecruisers *Derfflinger* and *Lützow*.

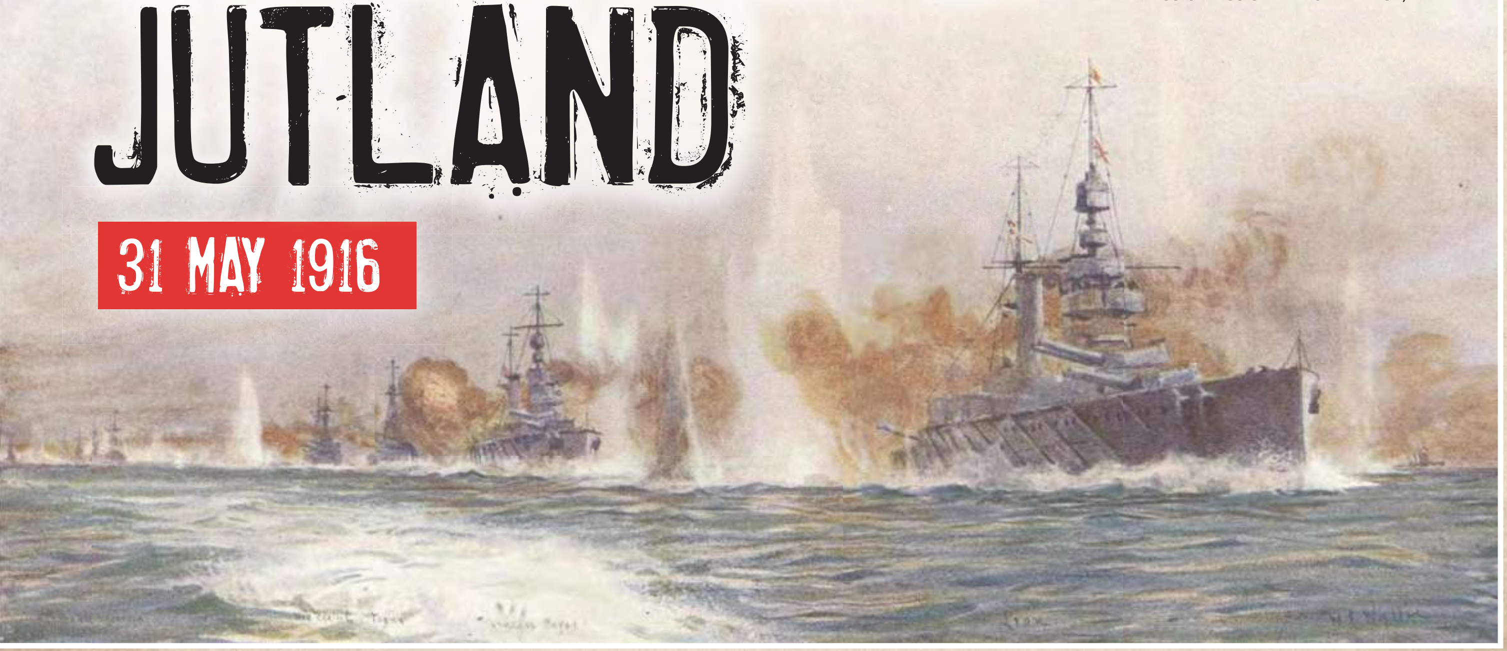
SINCE THE outbreak of the First World War the opposing navies of Britain and Germany had sought to catch the other at a disadvantage and inflict a mortal blow. The Royal Navy's Grand Fleet hoped to be able to bring its numerical advantage to bear against the German High Seas Fleet, whilst the Germans schemed to draw elements of the Grand Fleet into open waters and defeat it piecemeal. Yet when the two great naval forces finally encountered each other in the North Sea off Jutland on 31 May 1916, it was almost by coincidence.

It transpired that the opposing navies had both planned major operations at the same period, with Admiral Sir John Jellicoe hoping to tempt the Germans out of the security of their harbours by sending a pair of light cruiser squadrons through the Kattegat channel between Denmark and Sweden, whilst Admiral Reingard Scheer sought the same response from the British by using his battlecruisers to bombard Britain's east coast. Both admirals hoped to lure the enemy into a trap.

What Scheer did not know, however, was that his signals were being intercepted by the Admiralty. Those signals indicated that the High Seas Fleet was preparing to put to sea. With the Grand Fleet already gearing up for action the opportunity to engage the High Seas Fleet seemed to have arrived at last. The scene was set for the greatest sea battle of the First World War and the largest fleet action since Trafalgar.

Scheer had hoped to be able to draw the Grand Fleet towards his submarines which would be lying in wait and into a newly-sown minefield. In the ensuing confusion this would cause, the battlecruisers of Admiral Hipper would engage the British who, it was expected, would give chase only to find themselves steaming onto the guns of the High Seas battleships. The Grand Fleet, though, would be out in force, a force far stronger than that of Admiral Scheer.

Though the Admiralty had no idea of the scale or scope of the German operation, thanks to the intelligence derived from the intercepted signals the Grand Fleet was at sea before the High Seas Fleet and the German minefields and submarines proved ineffective. But both great battle fleets were out on the highs seas and heading towards each other. ▶▶



BELOW: HMS *Lion* leading the battlecruisers during the Battle of Jutland. By the end of the battle, HMS *Lion* had been hit a total of fourteen times and suffered ninety-nine dead and fifty-one wounded during the battle. (ALL IMAGES HISTORIC MILITARY PRESS UNLESS STATED OTHERWISE)

Shortly after 14.10 hours on 31 May 1916, HMS *Galatea* of the 1st Light Cruiser Squadron sighted two ships on the horizon and set off at full speed to investigate. At 14.28 *Galatea* opened fire. The Battle of Jutland had begun.

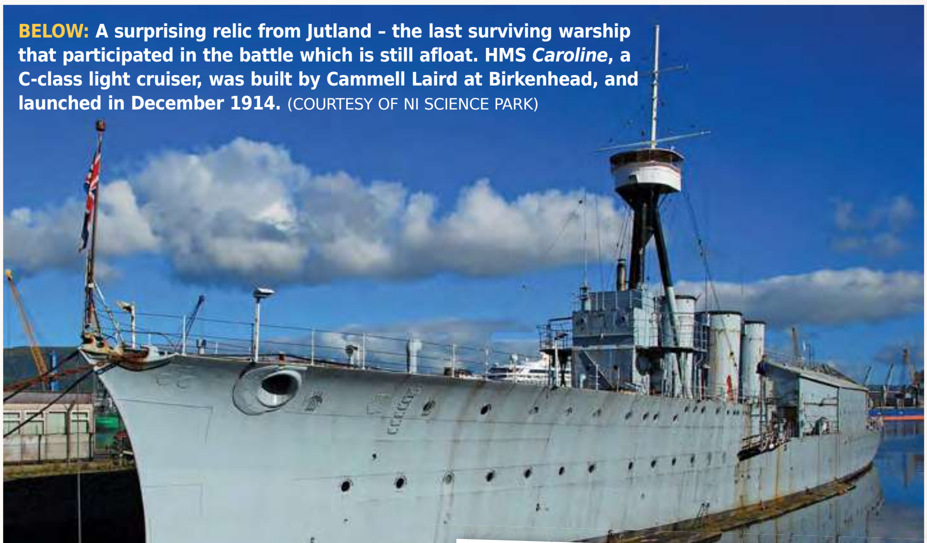
The news of the presence of the Germans was relayed to Admiral Beatty on the First Battlecruiser Squadron's flagship HMS *Lion* and he ordered his ships, along with the Second Battlecruiser Squadron, to follow. Unknown to Beatty, the signal which should have been passed onto the super-dreadnoughts of the Fifth Battle Squadron was not seen amidst the thick smoke emitted by the battlecruisers. With the passing of every minute the two parts of Beatty's force were steaming away from each other. It was a full seven minutes before Rear Admiral Sir Hugh Evan-Thomas realised what had happened and turned to the southwest by which time he was ten miles astern of Beatty.

At 14.35 hours another signal from HMS *Galatea* indicated the sighting of a considerable number of enemy ships. The opposing squadrons, now certain to be engaged, began forming up, allowing Evan-Thomas to close the gap.

The British battlecruisers with their 13.5-inch guns could easily out-range the 11- and 12-inch guns of the German battleships. Yet the British ships did not open fire when the German ships came into range because of deficiencies in their range-finding equipment which over-estimated the distance between the opposing ships. As a result, it was the Germans that opened fire first.

Evan-Thomas's super-dreadnoughts *Barham*, *Valiant*, *Warspite* and *Malaya*, with their 15-inch guns, then began to join in the action. Soon, too, the destroyers of both sides added their torpedoes to the battle. Though they caused the big ships to manoeuvre to avoid the torpedoes, no harm was done to the battlecruisers and dreadnoughts. The opposing destroyers met in what was described as 'a spirited little action'.

Already it had been noted that whilst the shells of the British ships fell in lines, the Germans' landed in clusters. This meant that more British shells found their mark, but when a cluster of German shells did strike home, the effect was devastating. The German ships also had the wind in their favour in that the clouds of smoke from the guns and the funnels, compounded by variable mists, frequently obscured them from the British ships which, with the sun behind them, showed up dark against the afternoon light. This meant that at times the British gunners had to pause whilst the Germans could continue to load and fire.



BELOW: **A surprising relic from Jutland - the last surviving warship that participated in the battle which is still afloat. HMS *Caroline*, a C-class light cruiser, was built by Cammell Laird at Birkenhead, and launched in December 1914.** (COURTESY OF NI SCIENCE PARK)

Beatty's position became even more precarious when the main body of Scheer's High Seas Fleet appeared – sixteen huge battleships. It must have seemed to the German commander that the long-desired opportunity to catch a significant proportion of the Grand Fleet had finally arrived.

The battlecruisers were no match for the German battleships. Everything now depended on the Fifth Battle Squadron. HMS *Barham* began to take heavy fire – as did the other dreadnoughts. But if Scheer thought that his moment had come, he was soon to realise that he had been deceived, as Beatty turned to the north towards Jellicoe's waiting battle squadrons. At 18.30 hours, to the astonishment of the Germans, the two main battle fleets came within range. 'Suddenly we were practically surrounded,' remarked *Obermatrose* Blessman in the German dreadnought SMS *Posen*. 'The entire British fleet had suddenly appeared. We were in a tight corner.'

ABOVE: **The Royal Navy's battlecruiser HMS *Indomitable* pictured in port. She damaged the German battlecruisers *Seydlitz* and *Derfflinger* during the Battle of Jutland.** (US LIBRARY OF CONGRESS)

Scheer responded immediately with an expertly executed 180 degree turn. Now began a desperate race, with the German ships under heavy fire from the British dreadnoughts. Scheer knew that he had to preserve his capital ships. He used his destroyers and battlecruisers to hold up the British battleships, knowing that he was sacrificing them to the enemy.

Nightfall brought a close to the battle for the day. Throughout the night there were occasional contacts but Jellicoe waited for daybreak before seeking to re-new battle. By that time, however, Scheer was too far away. The great battle which both sides had sought, believing that they could change the war, had ended inconclusively.

The Royal Navy lost fourteen ships, including three battlecruisers, and suffered 7,000 casualties compared to eleven, mostly lighter ships, lost by the Germans who suffered far fewer casualties. Both sides claimed victory, but it was the Grand Fleet which still cruised the North Sea, never to be challenged by Scheer's ships again. ●

BELOW: **British and German sailors buried side by side in Frederikshavn Cemetery. Pictured here during the 1920s, the British memorial is on the left; the German one nearest the camera.**

BY MAY 1916, it was clear to the Germans that the British were preparing for a major offensive on the Western Front, the build-up on the Somme having been clearly observed and monitored. In an effort to pull resources northwards, the German high command instigated a local offensive in Flanders.

As Haig himself wrote in his despatch at the end of the year, 'while my final preparations [for the Somme] were in progress the enemy made two unsuccessful attempts to interfere with my arrangements'. He went to explain further: 'The first, directed on the 21st May against our positions on the Vimy Ridge, south and south-east of Souchez, resulted in a small enemy gain of no strategic or tactical importance; and rather than weaken my offensive by involving additional troops in the task of recovering the lost ground, I decided to consolidate a position in rear of our original line. The second enemy attack was delivered on the 2nd June on a front of over one and a half miles from Mount Sorrell [sic] to Hooge, and succeeded in penetrating to a maximum depth of 700 yards.'

As the following account by the Canadian War Museum reveals, it was 'the 3rd Canadian Division, which … was the target of a crushing German bombardment on the morning of 2 June. The barrage devastated the forward Canadian positions and killed hundreds, including the division commander, Major-General Malcolm Mercer. German infantry then swept forward, capturing Canadian positions at Mount Sorrel and on two surrounding hills. A hastily organized counterattack on 3 June failed. Three days later, the Germans exploded four mines under the Canadian positions and captured the village of Hooge.'

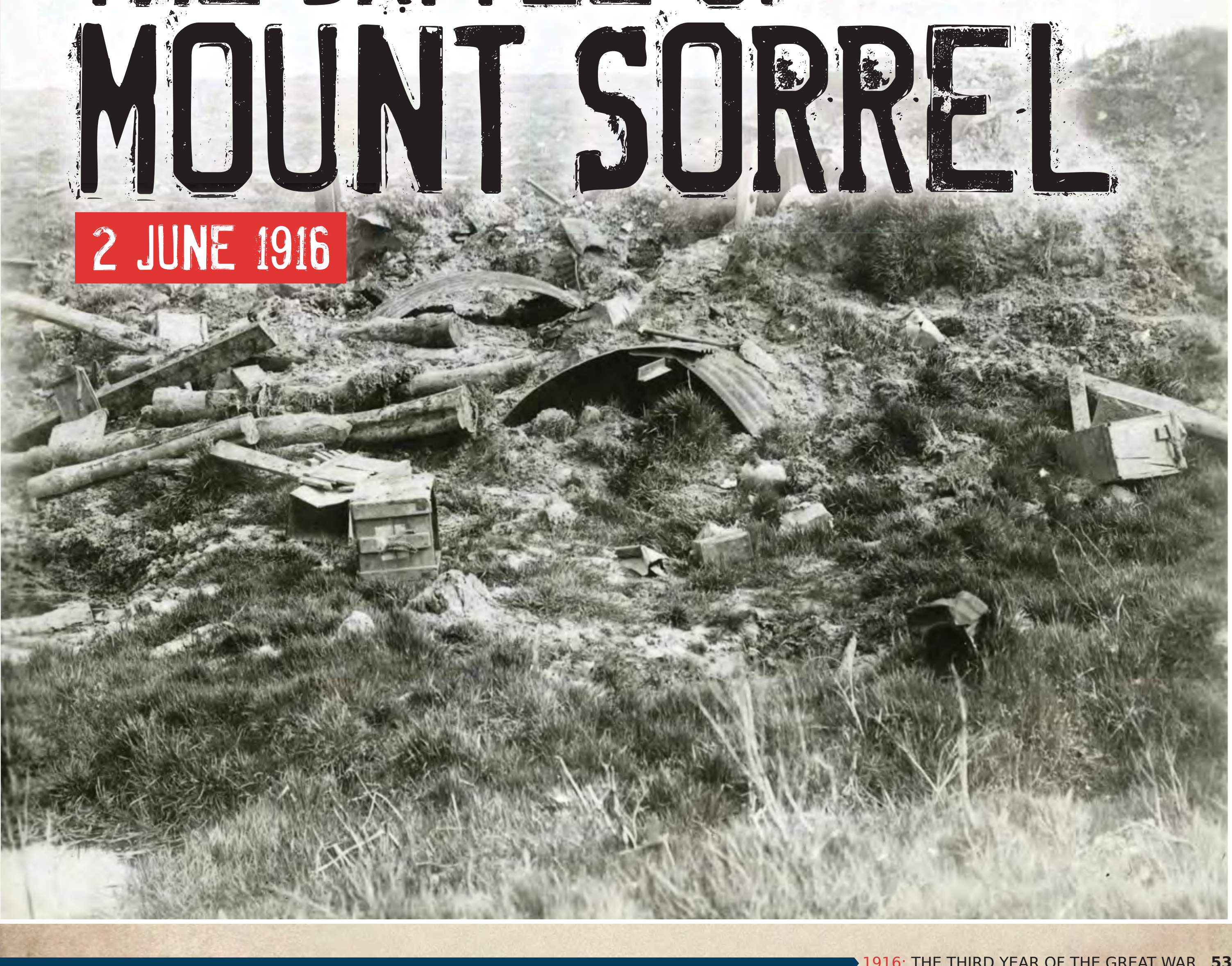
Haig was concerned. The ground taken by the Germans provided excellent observation over the Ypres Salient, the town itself, and the approach roads, railways and tracks. 'As the southern part of the lost position commanded our trenches,' he recalled, 'I judged it necessary to recover it … By an attack launched on the 13th June, carefully prepared and well executed, this was successfully accomplished by the troops on the spot.' Once again the troops 'on the spot' were the Canadians.

The Canadian Corps commander, Sir Julian Byng, was determined to retake the lost ground. After a heavy artillery bombardment, two divisions of the Canadian Corps, supported by the British 20th (Light) Division, attacked during the early hours of 13 June. In this major set-piece battle, the Canadians drove back the Germans and recaptured much of the lost ground. The Battle of Mount Sorrel lasted for almost two weeks and cost the Canadians over 8,000 casualties.

The British Official History of the war notes that 'the first Canadian deliberately planned attack in any force [of the Great War] had resulted in an unqualified success'. Likewise, concluded Haig, 'neither of these enemy attacks succeeded in delaying the preparations for the major operations which I had in view'. ●

THE BATTLE OF MOUNT SORREL

2 JUNE 1916



MAIN PICTURE: **Destroyed dugouts and shelters on Mount Sorrel pictured after the Armistice. Prior to the war, most of the terrain here was heavily wooded.** (LIBRARY AND ARCHIVES, CANADA)

FIELD MARSHAL KITCHENER KILLED

5 JUNE 1916

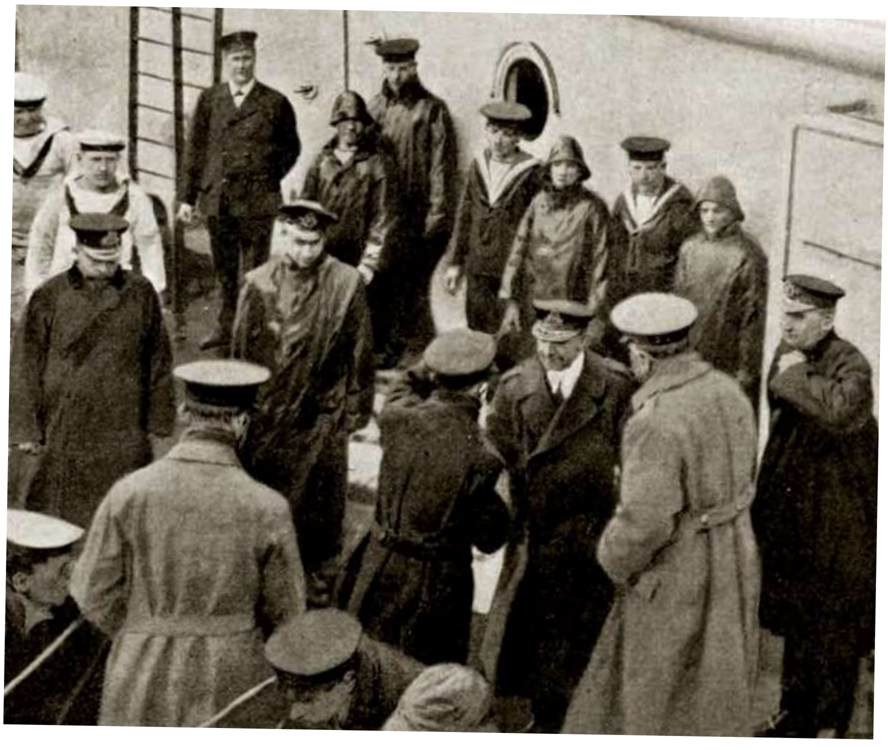
ABOVE: Field Marshal Lord Kitchener. (US LIBRARY OF CONGRESS)

In May 1916, it was arranged that Field Marshal Horatio Herbert Kitchener and Lloyd George (the then munitions minister) – the two key figures in Britain's war effort – would go to Russia to maintain relationships with this important, if faltering, ally. At the last moment, Lloyd George decided that he could not afford to leave his new ministry for such a long period, leaving Kitchener to travel to Russia alone.

On 5 June, Kitchener arrived at Scapa Flow aboard the destroyer HMS *Oak*. At the great naval anchorage he transferred to the Devonshire-class cruiser HMS *Hampshire* for the voyage around the north cape of Norway to the Russian port of Archangel.

Consequently, at 16.45 hours, *Hampshire* slipped its mooring and sailed from Scapa Flow. An hour later, the cruiser was joined by her escort, the destroyers *Unity* and *Victor*, with revised instructions to take the westerly passage round the Orkneys rather than the more direct eastern route. The ships steamed out into the open sea and into a strong north-easterly gale.

Soon the destroyers were having trouble keeping up with the much more powerful cruiser in the heavy seas and at 18.20 hours *Unity* and *Victor* were ordered to return to port. HMS *Hampshire* ploughed on alone through the force-nine gale. At 19.30 hours *Hampshire* struck a mine off Marwick Head.

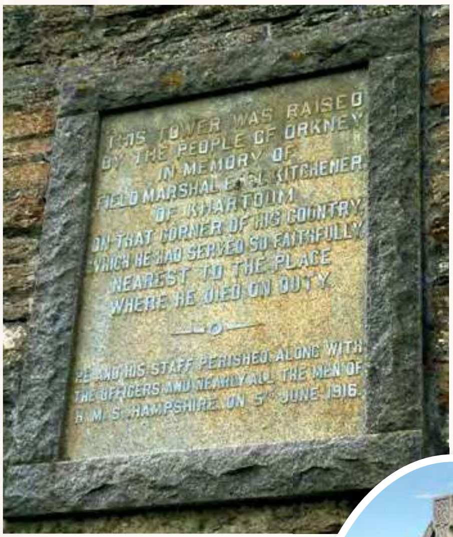


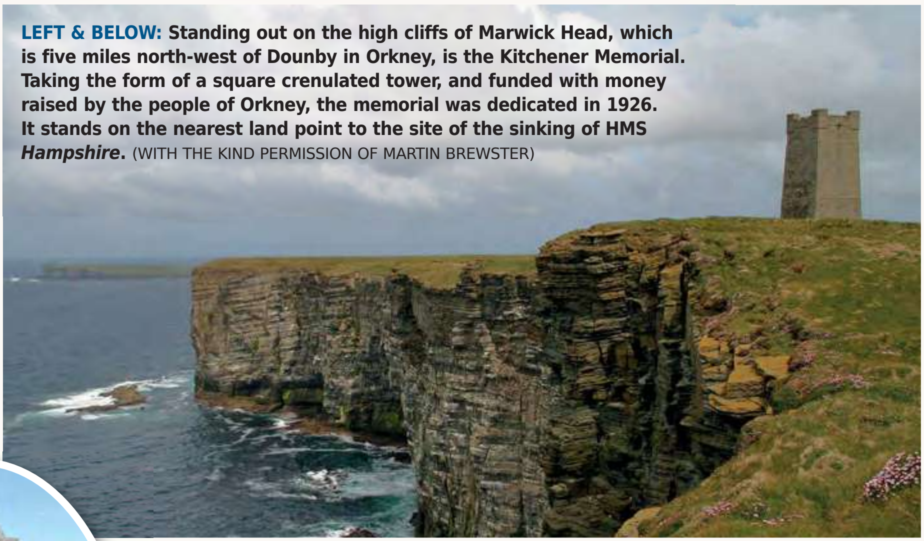
BELOW: One of the last photographs ever taken of Lord Kitchener. At 12.55 hours on 5 June 1916, whilst at Scapa Flow, he boarded the battleship HMS *Iron Duke*, from the destroyer HMS *Oak*, before proceeding to HMS *Hampshire*. Here, on *Iron Duke*, Kitchener is bade farewell by Admiral Jellicoe - with whom he is seen shaking hands. Jellicoe is facing the camera in the very centre of the picture; to his left is Kitchener, on his right Mr. J.H. O'Beirne of the Diplomatic Service. (HISTORIC MILITARY PRESS)

A massive explosion, followed by at least one other, ripped the ship apart and in just fifteen minutes *Hampshire* went down. There were just twelve survivors from the 655 men on board. Of Kitchener there was no sign – not even a body.

When the news of Kitchener's death hit the newsstands, the entire country was stunned. One of the Kitchener's Army volunteers, who was interviewed by the *Sunday Times* in 1988 at the age of 101, still recalled exactly where he was when the news broke: 'I was in Chattenden Barracks in Kent as a Drill Sergeant. When we told the troops about Kitchener's death, they said: "Oh my God! What's going to happen to us now Kitchener's gone?" He was the driving force in this country – we thought we'd probably lose the war as a result.'

Almost immediately conspiracy theories began to emerge as the British nation could not accept that the Empire's greatest soldier had merely drowned. Amongst the many bizarre stories that began to circulate was that the sinking of HMS *Hampshire* was a smoke-screen to fool the Germans and in reality Kitchener had continued his voyage to Russia safely by another means. As the weeks passed with no news of Kitchener's whereabouts, other, even more improbable,


THIS TOWER WAS RAISED
BY THE PEOPLE OF ORKNEY
IN MEMORY OF
FIELD MARSHAL EARL KITCHENER
OF KHARTOUM
ON THAT CORNER OF HIS COUNTRY
WHICH HE HAD SERVED SO FAITHFULLY
NEAREST TO THE PLACE
WHERE HE DIED ON DUTY.
HE AND HIS STAFF PERISHED ALONG WITH
THE OFFICERS AND NEARLY ALL THE MEN OF
H.M.S. HAMPSHIRE ON 5th JUNE 1916.



LEFT & BELOW: **Standing out on the high cliffs of Marwick Head, which is five miles north-west of Dounby in Orkney, is the Kitchener Memorial. Taking the form of a square crenulated tower, and funded with money raised by the people of Orkney, the memorial was dedicated in 1926. It stands on the nearest land point to the site of the sinking of HMS *Hampshire*.** (WITH THE KIND PERMISSION OF MARTIN BREWSTER)

LEFT: **The memorial to the officers and men of *Hampshire* at Lyness Royal Naval Cemetery. The Cemetery was begun in 1915 when Scapa Flow was the base of the Grand Fleet. It remained as a Royal Naval base until July 1946 and, therefore, contains graves from both wars.** (WITH THE KIND PERMISSION OF MARTIN BREWSTER)

theories were proposed – that he was living as a hermit on a remote island, or that Kitchener was never on board *Hampshire* at all, his place being taken by a double. The fact that Kitchener's body was never found added to the mystery. This situation was compounded by the fact that local inhabitants were prevented by the army from going to the cliffs to help rescue survivors and, despite repeated appeals, the crew of the Stromness Lifeboat was not given clearance to launch.

What really happened is far more mundane, though equally terrible. The loss of *Hampshire* occurred just five days after the war's largest sea battle off the coast of Jutland – see page 51. As part of this engagement, German submarines had mined the principal shipping routes and waited, torpedoes loaded, outside the Scottish harbours for the Grand Fleet to emerge.

Though his plan did not go entirely as Scheer had hoped, some Scottish coastal waters had been successfully mined. This included the sea to the west of the Orkneys where *U-75* lay in wait for the British warships. Due to a breakdown in German communications, *U-75* failed to attack the British fleet as it returned to Scapa Flow after the Battle of Jutland – but it had laid a deadly ring of twenty-two mines off the west coast of Orkney.

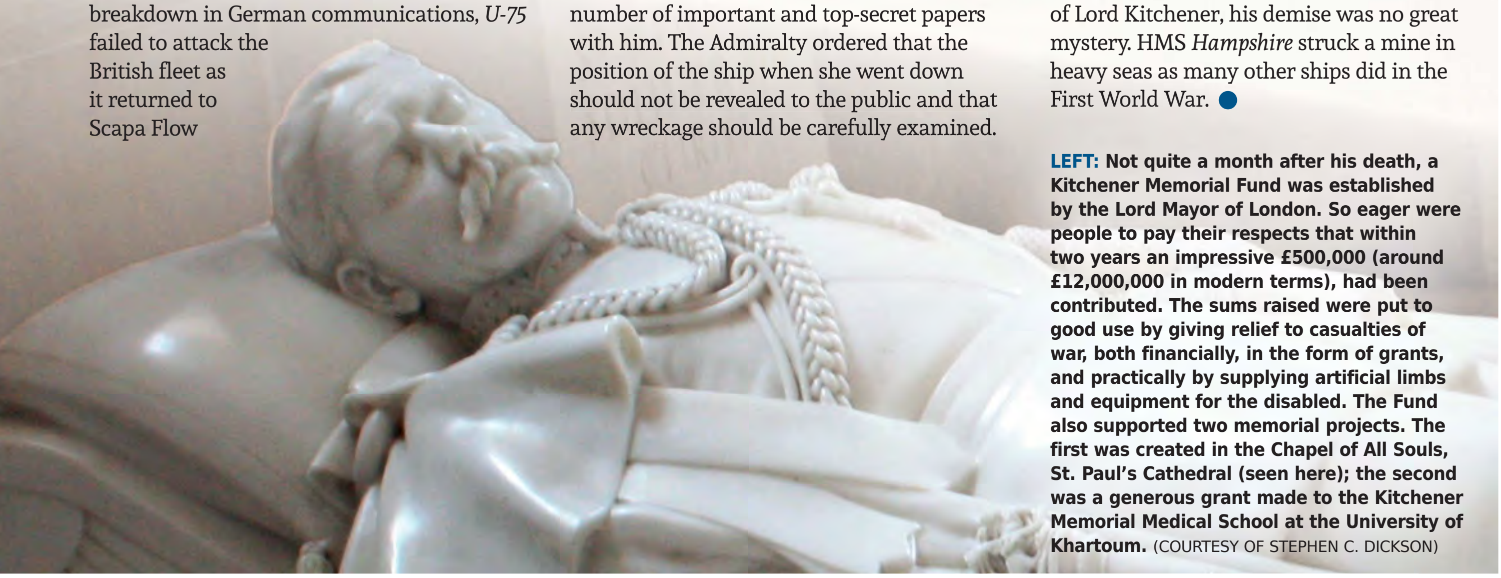
Admiral Sir John Jellicoe, who commanded the Grand Fleet and who had lunched with Kitchener on the day the Field Marshal died, was aware that there were German mines around Orkney. This was because the trawler *Laurel Crown* had been sunk by a mine in the same waters just three days earlier. However, the Admiralty had neglected to pass on this vital piece of information to Captain Savill on the *Hampshire*!

Jellicoe, somewhat stating the obvious, accepted that he should not have allowed the cruiser to continue its journey into a known minefield, and without destroyer escort, where enemy submarines were likely to be on the prowl.

It is true that the locals were kept away from the coast and the Stromness Lifeboat was not permitted to go and help rescue survivors but this was because Kitchener was carrying a number of important and top-secret papers with him. The Admiralty ordered that the position of the ship when she went down should not be revealed to the public and that any wreckage should be carefully examined. The military took over the coastline to watch for any of these papers being washed up on the shore. Communications between Orkney and the mainland were suspended, even to the extent of enforcing a strict censorship of private letters, all of which, of course, added fuel to the conspiracy theories.

The evidence points to confusion rather than conspiracy, but Kitchener had indeed become an increasing embarrassment to the Government. In 1915 he was blamed for the shell shortage and responsibility for munitions was taken away from him. Later that year Kitchener was stripped of control over war strategy and left with just manpower and recruitment in his portfolio. Kitchener offered to resign, but he was still idolised by the general public and the cabinet dare not drop him from the Government. C.P. Scott, editor of the *Manchester Guardian*, remarked after Kitchener's death that 'as for the old man, he could not have done better than to have gone down, as he was a great impediment lately'.

Though suspicion still surrounds the death of Lord Kitchener, his demise was no great mystery. HMS *Hampshire* struck a mine in heavy seas as many other ships did in the First World War. ●



LEFT: **Not quite a month after his death, a Kitchener Memorial Fund was established by the Lord Mayor of London. So eager were people to pay their respects that within two years an impressive £500,000 (around £12,000,000 in modern terms), had been contributed. The sums raised were put to good use by giving relief to casualties of war, both financially, in the form of grants, and practically by supplying artificial limbs and equipment for the disabled. The Fund also supported two memorial projects. The first was created in the Chapel of All Souls, St. Paul's Cathedral (seen here); the second was a generous grant made to the Kitchener Memorial Medical School at the University of Khartoum.** (COURTESY OF STEPHEN C. DICKSON)

AN ARAB ALLIANCE

8 JUNE 1916

RIGHT: **A portrait of T.E. Lawrence taken while he was serving as British Liaison Officer to Emir Faisal at the Versailles Peace Conference in 1919.** (HISTORIC MILITARY PRESS)

LONG BEFORE Tsar Nicholas I declared Turkey to be 'the sick man of Europe', the Ottoman Turks had struggled to maintain their authority over the many nations of which their empire was composed. Not the least of these were the Arabs, who sought their own identity and a separation from Constantinople. This was prompted, ironically, by Turkish nationalism which placed the needs of the Turkish state above any other influence, including religion. Turkish nationalism led to Arab nationalism – revolt was inevitable.

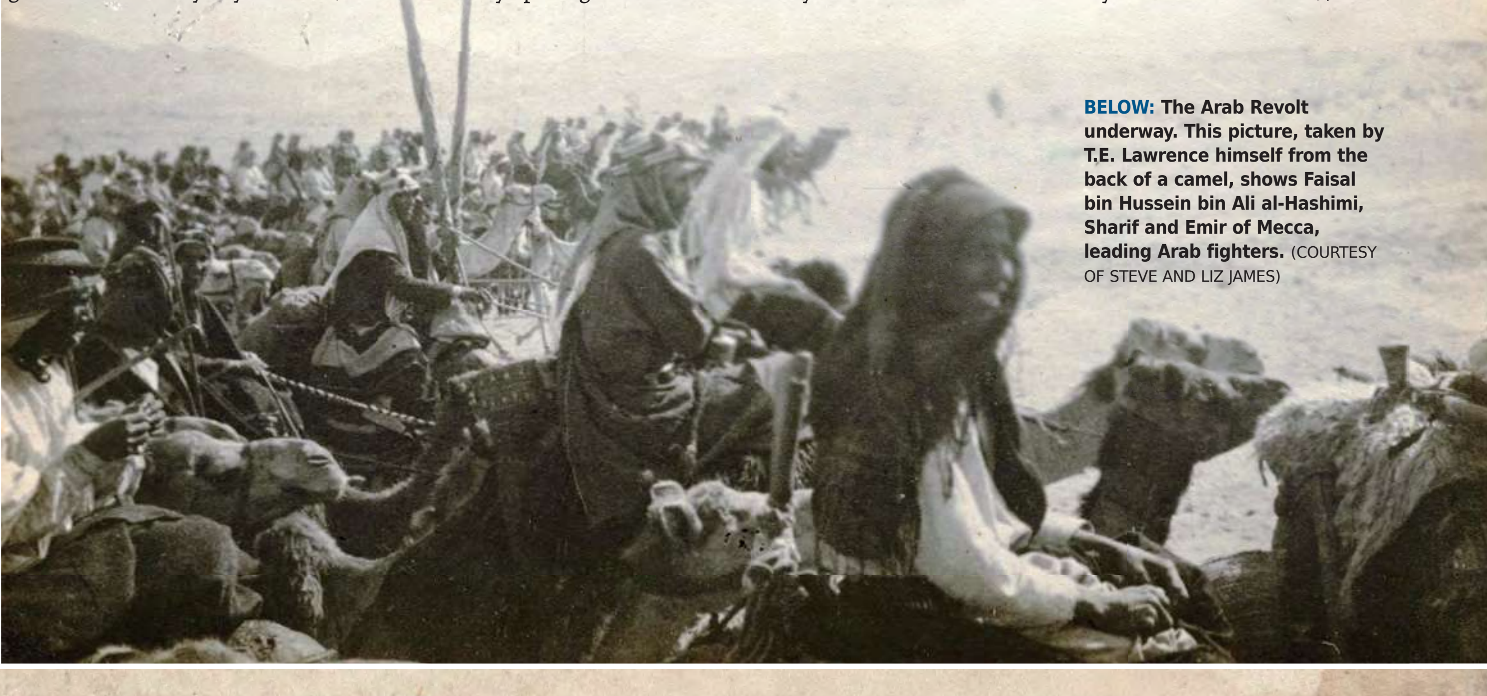
With the outbreak of war in 1914, Turkey joined the Central Powers (secretly on 2 August 1914; openly on 29 October 1914). Fearing trouble from the Arabs the Turks arrested, tortured (and later executed), many of the leading figures amongst the Arab nationalist movements in the key centres of Damascus and Beirut.

These and other oppressive measures prompted Grand Sharif Hussein bin Ali, the guardian of the holy city of Mecca, to enter into an alliance with Britain and France sometime around 8 June 1916. As part of this, the British High Commissioner in Egypt, Henry McMahon, promised Hussein that after the war the Arabs would have their own nation stretching from Persia to Egypt. 'So passions were aroused,' wrote one contemporary historian, 'fluctuating zeal was maintained by the distribution of gold, and inter-tribal jealousies were suppressed if not eliminated by fostering and keeping alive a vision of national independence'.

The Arab Revolt began with attacks upon the Turkish garrisons at Medina and Mecca. Sharif Hussein himself supervised the attack on Mecca. He remained in his palace directing operations even under heavy shell fire. The Turkish garrison refused to surrender, and the Arabs captured the main bazaar, the residential section, the administration section and the sacred mosque of the Holy Kaaba. The men of the Turkish garrison in the forts on the three hills overlooking Mecca retaliated by opening fire with their artillery on the Great Mosque. As can be imagined, this proved a fatal mistake and, roused to even greater efforts, the Arabs took control of the holy city.

The Ottomans still possess Medina and they were determined to hold it at all costs. This was because it was the burial place of Mohamed, and the Ottoman's claim of hegemony over the Muslims depended on their hold upon the city. If the Arabs held both Mecca and Medina, Ottoman influence throughout the Middle East, the Levant and across North Africa would be enormously diminished. The battle for the great cities of the Hejaz was a fight for the very soul of Islam.

Though Medina remained in Turkish hands, by the end of September 1916 the Arabs had seized many of the Red Sea ports, with the help of the Royal Navy, and had taken 6,000 Turkish prisoners. The Arabs attacked the large city of Taif, seventy miles from Mecca. The garrison here consisted of 3,000 men with ten 75mm Krupp guns and was attacked by Emir Adbullah with 5,000



BELOW: **The Arab Revolt underway. This picture, taken by T.E. Lawrence himself from the back of a camel, shows Faisal bin Hussein bin Ali al-Hashimi, Sharif and Emir of Mecca, leading Arab fighters.** (COURTESY OF STEVE AND LIZ JAMES)

ABOVE: **The 1916 Arab Revolt was often carried out by mounted Arab tribesmen, who knew the land intimately and were excellent marksmen.** (US LIBRARY OF CONGRESS)

LEFT: **A view of the kind of terrain over which the Arab forces operated. Corporal 1489 J.W. Thomas, who, as a member of the 1/6th Battalion Manchester Regiment had been assigned to T.E. Lawrence as a signaller, made the following comment on the picture's reverse: 'Not a tree or shrub to give shade. Blistering hot by day, blistering cold by night.'** (COURTESY OF STEVE AND LIZ JAMES)

RIGHT: **King Faisal (in the centre) pictured reviewing troops at Amman, during a visit by Sir Herbert Samuel after the First World War.** (US LIBRARY OF CONGRESS)

ABOVE: **After the war, Lawrence's importance continued. He is pictured here walking in the gardens of Government House, Jerusalem, in company with Winston Churchill (left) and Emir Abdullah (on the right) during a conference in 1921.** (US LIBRARY OF CONGRESS)

Arab tribesmen but the insurgents could make no impression upon the place.

The Arabs also experienced a lack of success in other parts of the Hejaz region, which was held by a strong Turkish force of 15,000 men. Britain sent a number of Army officers into the Hejaz to help the Arabs, amongst which was a young Captain T.E. Lawrence who was sent from Egypt to assist the Hashemite forces in the Hejaz in October 1916.

Lawrence, who had graduated from Oxford with First Class Honours, had been working as an archaeologist in the Middle East before the war and knew the area well and he understood the Arabs and their customs. He was quickly accepted by the Arabs and became a close friend of two of the principal Arab leaders, Faisal (later King Faisal) and Abdullah. Through these friendships Lawrence was able to co-ordinate the activities of the Arabs in support of British forces in the region.

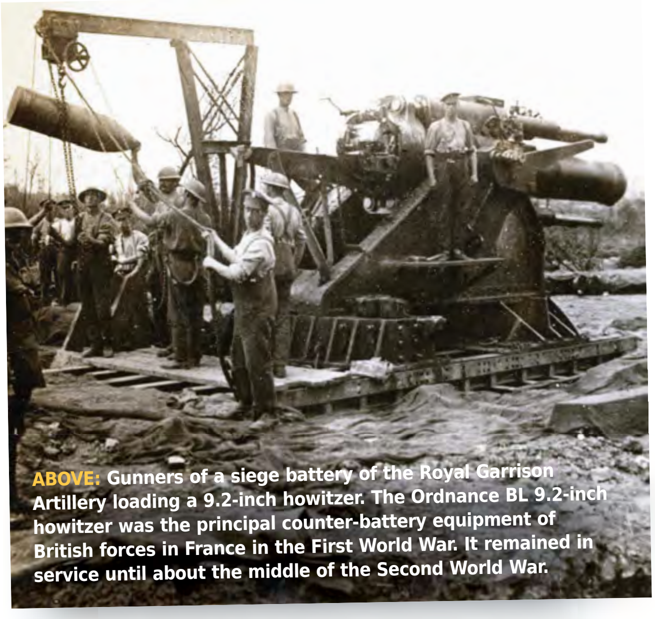
With considerable aid and money from Britain and France, the Arab Revolt's momentum was maintained. Lawrence persuaded Faisal not to continue throwing his men at the walls of Medina but instead to attack the Hejaz railway. This would tie down large numbers of Turkish troops in guarding and repairing the line without incurring Arab casualties.

The Hejaz railway was of enormous importance to the Turks, without which its power in the region could not be maintained. The Hejaz is a district of what is now Saudi Arabia which stretches some 200 miles along the coast of the Red Sea for nearly 700 miles, with its boundary being the Great Arabian Desert. The deserts on its eastern perimeter and the mountains on the west that border the coastal tract deterred both invasion and migration and the region remained isolated and untroubled until the growth of Islam. The consequential expansion led to conflict and then in turn conquest, with, ultimately, the emir of Mecca being little more than an Ottoman vassal.

The Ottomans' hold on the Hejaz was never very secure due to the difficulty of transporting its troops around the region – that was until the building of the Hejaz railway. If the railway was cut, the Turkish garrisons would become isolated.

The Arabs did not lack enthusiasm for their cause but were disorganised and deficient in arms and money, which the British and French were able to provide. Lawrence helped to bring together the Arabs under Faisal who assumed the title of King of the Hejaz on 16 November. General Sir R. Wingate was appointed to supervise British troops who were being sent into the region, and Admiral Sir Rosslyn Wemyss attacked Turkish garrisons in the occupied Red Sea ports. The French also contributed to the general effort by landing a detachment of French Moslem troops led by Colonel E. Bremond with machine-guns and mountain artillery. The city of Taif was also finally taken by the Arabs thanks to the arrival of Egyptian soldiers with artillery. The fall of Taif resulted in the capture of eighty-three officers and almost 2,000 men, as well as vast stores of rifles, ammunition, shells and bombs.

This left just Medina as the only city in the Hejaz in the hands of the Ottomans. Thanks to the combined efforts of the Allies, the war in the desert was turning decidedly in favour of the Arabs. ●



ABOVE: Gunners of a siege battery of the Royal Garrison Artillery loading a 9.2-inch howitzer. The Ordnance BL 9.2-inch howitzer was the principal counter-battery equipment of British forces in France in the First World War. It remained in service until about the middle of the Second World War.

SOMME BOMBARDMENT BEGINS

24 JUNE 1916

HAVING FAILED to achieve the quick victory that the German High Command had expected when their forces marched into Belgium in August 1914, alternative plans were considered. In February 1916 the Germans launched an attack upon the vital strategic fortified region of Verdun. The Germans had no intention of actually taking Verdun, all they wanted was to provoke the French into counter-attacking, thus drawing the French onto their artillery. This practice followed the battles in the Champagne region in 1915 where the Germans saw that by sitting on the defensive they could kill far more French soldiers who were thrown into the attack.

The German scheme worked well, and the French Army suffered terrible losses. Meanwhile the British army to the west on the Somme was comparatively untroubled. The French Commander-in-Chief, Marshal Joffre, could not withdraw and allow the Germans to seize more French territory. The French simply had to fight on. The only way that any kind of relief could be given to his troops was if the British Expeditionary Force attacked on the Somme, drawing Germans troops, and artillery, away from Verdun.

Haig was urged to mount an offensive on the Somme in the spring of 1916, but he resisted. Most of the original regular soldiers of the BEF had been killed and the British army on the Somme was principally composed of reservists and the untried volunteers of Lord Kitchener's New Army. Many of Haig's battalions were the famous 'Pals' battalions, drawn from across the UK, who had never seen action beyond the trenches.

Haig resisted Joffre's appeals for as long as he could, but he realised that the French Army was on the point of collapse and, though he still wanted more time for his troops to be trained and conditioned, he eventually agreed to open an offensive on the Somme at the end of June.

Once the plans for the Somme offensive had been agreed, the programme for the preliminary artillery bombardment was issued on 5 June. It was scheduled to take place over five days before the infantry assault, beginning on 24 June – as it transpired, bad weather forced the postponement of the attack by forty-eight hours until 1 July.

The first two days of the barrage would focus upon wire cutting while the three remaining days would continue this work as well as concentrating upon German-held trenches, dugouts, villages and batteries. The programme for each artillery detachment was divided into two-hour periods which allowed rest for the crews and allowed time for the guns to cool down. Subject to availability of munitions there would be a continuous barrage upon the German lines. Some of the heavy howitzers were late arriving on the Somme and their crews had little time to become accustomed to the region.

Despite low cloud and rain, the opening shots of the preparatory barrage duly began on 24 June. Launched on a grand scale along the entire Somme front, and lasting for eight days, this was the largest bombardment carried out by British artillery to date during the war. Three times the number of field guns and heavy guns were used during this bombardment in comparison to the Loos campaign nine months earlier. The objectives of the preliminary bombardment were to destroy the enemy trench system, to cut breaches through the German wire, to cause casualties and to demoralise their adversaries. An unprecedented number of artillery pieces

LEFT & ABOVE: An 18-pounder in a make-shift emplacement. During the preliminary bombardment leading up to 1 July, British artillery fired more shells at the sixteen-mile length of trenches to be assaulted than on the entire Western Front over the preceding twelve months.

were under Rawlinson's disposal for this task, including 1,000 field guns, 233 howitzers and 180 counter-battery guns.

Brigadier-General Trevor Ternan, commanding 102nd Brigade, recalled: 'The preliminary bombardment began with a roar which seemed to shake the earth. The air was split with the combined detonations of hundreds of guns of all calibres. From the trench outside one heard with the utmost satisfaction the rushing through the air of vast numbers of projectiles of all sizes flying over our heads on their way to the Boche lines ... It was almost impossible to realise that any human being in any of these places could possibly survive.'

The preliminary bombardment of German lines did not achieve all of the expected results. Many shells missed their targets, while others were duds and did not explode on impact. Indeed, a third of all shells fired were classified as duds. Fuzes for 9.2-inch howitzer shells in particular detached as they was being projected towards their target and failed to explode as a consequence. An officer belonging to V Corps who advanced towards German lines at Mametz reported 'a dud shell every two or three yards over several acres of ground'.

The Allied soldiers waiting in the frontline and support trenches could observe this mass barrage as it pounded intensely upon the German lines. At night time the flashes of the guns and the sight of star shells floating gracefully in the air provided an unforgettable spectacle for observers on the British side of No Man's Land.

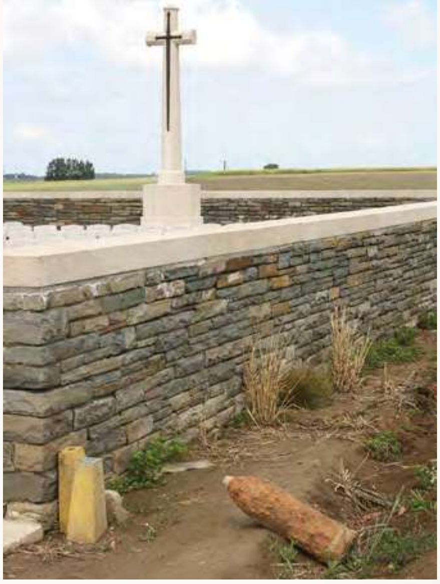
Whilst it was underway, however, the bombardment lifted the troops' confidence that their enemy's resolve had been smashed and that they would walk into the German lines. Private Fred Campling, with the 8th Norfolk Regiment, was positioned in dugouts close to Carnoy where he could observe the shelling of Montauban: 'Having left billets and taken up quarters in specially constructed dugouts in rear of our lines, we settled down to an enjoyment of the persistent and deadly fusillade of metal and high explosive hurled by our guns into the enemy's lines and occupied villages night and day for close upon a week. The effect, from a spectacular point of view was magnificent, and made a great impression upon us as to the important part taken by our artillery, incidentally giving us confidence that no effort would be spared to minimise the difficulties of the task before us. At no time did the response to this onslaught give us cause for anxiety, although occasionally well-timed shrapnel shells caused loss in our front trenches. During this period of suspense, an atmosphere of quiet confidence and determination prevailed amongst all ranks, giving evidence that we possessed that greatest of all assets – sound morale.'

ABOVE: Troops manhandling an 18-pounder on the Western Front.

Sadly, as events would shortly reveal, the troops' confidence in the British barrage would soon be found to have been misplaced. ●

RIGHT: A part of the so-called 'Iron Harvest' unearthed on the Somme each year. This unexploded shell was photographed by the wall of Serre Road Cemetery Number 3. As ever with such objects, the advice is never to touch.

ABOVE: Located just west of Serre, and in the area where the British front line was located on 1 July 1916, is the Sheffield Memorial Park. Opened as a memorial park in 1936, the site still exhibits the scars of the shelling that occurred here. (ALL IMAGES HISTORIC MILITARY PRESS)



1 JULY 1916

THE FIRST DAY

AT 07.30 hours on 1 July 1916, the shrill blasts of hundreds of officers' whistles pierced the air along the eighteen miles of British front line trenches on the Somme. This was the signal for thousands of British soldiers to heave themselves up and over their parapets and to lurch forward into No Man's Land towards the German wire. What happened next, as those men walked headlong into a flailing maelstrom of searing shell fragments and machine-gun bullets – many of them disappearing forever into clouds of swirling dust and smoke – has become the stuff of myth and legend.

ABOVE: A New Army battalion pictured resting whilst heading towards the front.

The first day of the Battle of the Somme has gone down in history as the single most destructive day ever experienced by the British Army. The men had been ordered to walk across No Man's Land, maintaining formation, and to occupy the German trenches where they would meet little opposition from the enemy who had been pounded relentlessly for the previous eight days. However, very little that day went according to plan.

Firstly, before the attackers had even left their own forward trenches, casualties had been high, as Lieutenant C. Ashford of the 1/7th Sherwood Foresters of the 46th (North Midland) Division explained: 'Casualties in our own trenches were very heavy owing to the intensity of the [German] bombardment and the congestion and owing to the fact that many men who fell disappeared beneath the mud, it was difficult to help the wounded. I stumbled over many bodies which were out of sight beneath the mud. The congestion in the jumping off trenches caused still greater congestion in the rear. Men pressing forward, found themselves held up by congestion in front and made a vulnerable target. This caused heavy casualties.'

At last Zero Hour, 07.30 hours, arrived, the whistles blew and the great attack began. The War Diary of the 16th Northumberland Fusiliers (Newcastle Commercials) described what happened in their assault upon Thiepval: 'When the barrage lifted 'A' and 'B' Coys moved forward in waves and were instantly fired upon by enemy's M.G. and snipers. The enemy stood upon their parapet and waved to our men to come on and picked them off with rifle fire. The enemy's fire was so intense that the advance was checked and the waves, or what was left of them, were forced to lie down.'

An un-named NCO who was with the 2nd Gordon Highlanders attacking Mametz recalled: 'It was half past seven to the tick when we scrambled out across our trenches and went across into the shell-swept area. We pressed quickly onward, dodging shells, shell holes and traps of all kinds strewn about for the feet of the unwary.'

Major-General Sir Henry de Beauvoir De Lisle's 29th Division, of VIII Corps, was ordered to capture Beaumont Hamel. 'We had seen the battalion on our right, the Royal Fusiliers, start off across No Man's Land, the first wave went forward,' wrote Captain E.W. Sheppard of the 1st Lancashire Fusiliers. 'The east bank of the lane lay in a slight dip which concealed men getting out of it from the enemy view and fire, but two steps brought them into exposure and the bulk of the first wave got no further than the edge of this dip where they were swept over in swither, and those who were still alive crawled or were dragged down into the lane which was now full of wounded.'

MAIN PICTURE: The 103rd (Tyneside Irish) Brigade, part of the 34th Division, pictured advancing from the Tara-Usna Line to attack the village of La Boisselle on the morning of 1 July 1916. The 34th Division suffered heavier losses than any other British division that day. (ALL IMAGES HISTORIC MILITARY PRESS)

BELOW: This image, purported to show British soldiers moving forward through wire at the start of the Battle of the Somme, 1 July 1916, is a still from the British film *The Battle of the Somme.* Despite now being one of the most recognizable images from the First World War, this scene is generally considered to have been staged for the camera, possibly at a Trench Mortar School well behind the lines.

Such scenes were repeated across the Somme front and very few of the objectives set for 1 July were achieved. The only non-UK troops attacking on the British sector on 1 July 1916, were units from Bermuda and Newfoundland. Because Newfoundland was still a colony of Great Britain at the time – Newfoundland did not become a part of the Canadian confederation until 1949 – the Newfoundland Regiment was a part of the British Fourth Army on 1 July rather than the Canadian Corps, which was assigned to another part of the Allied line. The regiment was virtually wiped out during their failed attack at Beaumont-Hamel.

The Somme was one of the strongest German-held positions along the Western Front. Its defenders had spent eighteen months strengthening the line and had established a solid line of redoubts and fortresses. German machine-guns placed in excellent positions on high ridges dominated the battlefield and were a key factor in holding back the British infantry waves. Although British forces had a numerical advantage of fifteen divisions against six German divisions, the strength and depth of the German positions, many of which overlooked the British line of advance, was simply too formidable for them all to be taken. The artillery had not been able to destroy the German trenches, despite the intensity of the preliminary bombardment.

This was noted by Private C. Whitehead of the Royal Army Medical Corps: 'We occupy the German trenches, and what a surprise their dugouts are. They are about 30 feet or more in depth, and are fitted with electric lights and bells. There are also proper beds, mirrors, tables, chairs and stoves, and practically impossible for shells to penetrate them.' Such reasons were why the first day of the Somme was such a failure and cost so many young British lives.

ABOVE: The explosion of the mine under Hawthorn Ridge Redoubt - a photograph of the moment that the cinematographer Lieutenant Malins captured on film. The film footage that Malins took of this eruption lasted about twenty-three seconds with a slight pause as the cloud of dust and debris expands. It was footage that would make him famous. The mine caused a crater 130 feet across by 58 feet deep.

ABOVE: The calm before the storm. Troops pictured waiting, some still asleep, in a support trench shortly before zero hour near Beaumont Hamel.

Of the 141 days that comprise the Battle of the Somme, it is the opening day of the offensive that is often seen to most represent the sacrifice of a generation of young men. Before midnight on that fateful first Saturday in July 1916 – almost the middle day of the middle year of the First World War – the British Army suffered no less than 57,470 casualties – a number that comprised 585 prisoners of war, 2,152 men missing, 35,493 wounded and a staggering 19,240 dead.

Saturday, 1 July 1916 was a day which led to changes in the ways in which the British Army would fight its future battles. It was a day which put paid, once and for all, to any lingering hopes held by the British people for an early, victorious conclusion to that Great European War. But that was for the future. As darkness descended on the battlefield after that 'first day' of the Somme, there had been no stunning, overwhelming British victory. Well-planned and executed operations on some southern sectors had achieved deserved success but these had been more then outweighed by almost complete annihilation and crushing defeat further north and here only chaos and confusion reigned. ●

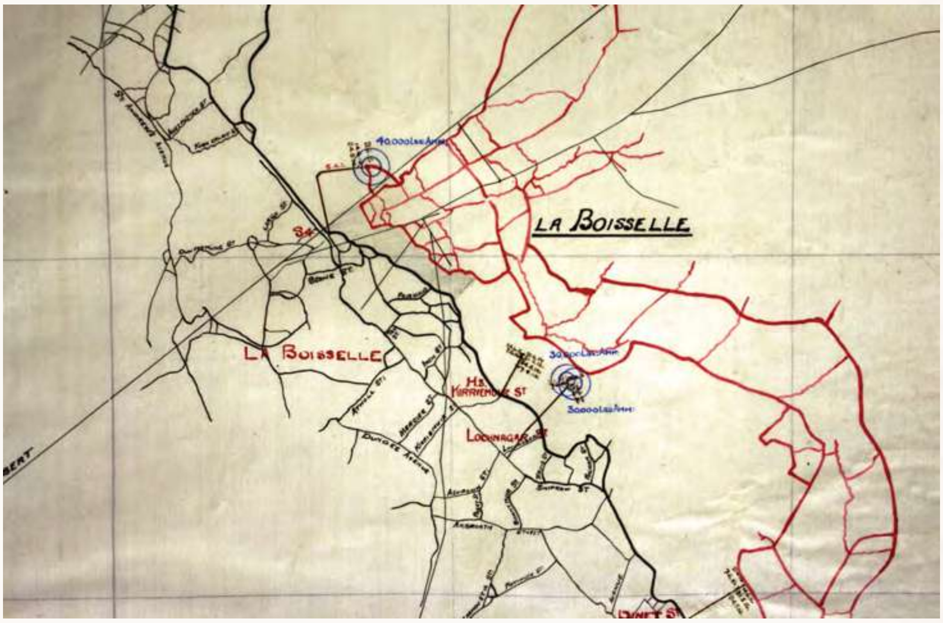
OF THE SOMME

1 JULY 1916

THE LOCHNAGAR

THE OPENING of the Somme offensive was to be preceded by the detonation of a number of large mines underneath key German strongpoints and positions to ensure that they were completely demolished and to create large breaches in the enemy's defences. The largest of all those mines had been placed under the German position known as the Schwaben Höhe just to the east of the village of La Boisselle. Referred to as the 'Lochnagar Mine', it was composed of two charges of 36,000lbs and 24,000lbs of ammonal in separate chambers.

The tunnel for the Lochnagar Mine was started on 11 November 1915, by the men of 185 Tunnelling Company Royal Engineers (RE), but was completed by 179 Tunnelling Company RE which took over in March 1916. To reach the intended target of the Lochnagar Mine, under the Schwaben Höhe, the tunnel dug by the engineers began 300 feet behind the British front line and over 900 feet from the German trenches.



ABOVE: A redrawn section of a trench map showing the positions of the British and German trenches (in red) around La Boisselle on 1 July 1916. Both the Y Sap (the top blue circle) and Lochnagar (lower blue circles) mines are marked. The main Albert-Bapaume road can be seen running across the sector from the left.

ABOVE: Five unidentified gunners of the 2nd Australian Field Artillery Brigade standing in the Lochnagar Crater in the summer of 1916 provide a clear illustration of its vast size. (COURTESY OF THE AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL)

By February 1916 the tunnel was almost 800 feet long at a depth of around fifty feet. It was at the start of this month that disaster struck. On the 4th, two officers and sixteen men were killed, either being burnt or gassed, when the Germans detonated a camouflet – a small explosive charge big enough to destroy enemy workings but not big enough to break the surface.

Such setbacks aside, the work had to continue. As the tunnellers drew nearer to the German line, progress was slowed due to the need to be as silent as possible whilst excavating. Pick-axes could not be used, so any further advance was achieved by lumps of chalk being prized out with a bayonet, caught without hitting the ground and passed back for disposal. Conditions were extremely difficult; the miners worked without boots and walked on sandbags, whilst talking was limited to a whisper. They could hear the Germans who were working around them in an opposing tunnel system.

In April the engineers branched left and right to the sides of the German redoubt and in mid-June they stopped driving forwards. The tunnels had not been pushed directly underneath the Schwaben Höhe so the mines were 'overcharged' with explosives to increase their destructive effect – the left hand of the two being the largest. As the chambers that had been dug were not big enough to hold all the explosives needed, the tunnels that branched to form the 'Y' were also filled.

It was expected that the explosion of the Lochnagar Mine would throw debris over the adjacent German trenches and the cloud of dust it would create would mask the British attack which would follow the detonation. The explosion would also create a crater with a lip fifteen feet high around its edge. It was intended that the British troops would race into the crater and seize the lip. This would give them a strong defensible position right in the heart of the German front line.

At 07.28 hours on 1 July, Captain James Young RE, from 179 Tunnelling Company, pressed down a set of switches. Deep underground the two charges detonated and, combined, formed

MAIN PICTURE: Two minutes before zero hour on 1 July 1916, the largest mine exploded on the Western Front in the First World War, the Lochnagar Mine, tore through the German lines south-east of La Boisselle. This is the resulting crater pictured in the years immediately after the Armistice in 1918. Time and weather have already softened its outlines. (ALL IMAGES HISTORIC MILITARY PRESS UNLESS STATED OTHERWISE)

BELOW: Looking from what was the area of the British front line towards Lochnagar Crater (indicated by the trees) showing the gradient up which the troops had to advance on 1 July 1916 – at a moment when the sound of the mine's explosion may well have still been reverberating in their ears, with their view obscured by the swirling dust and debris.

one massive crater. The shower of stones and debris from the explosion, amounting to more than 300,000 tons, shot as high as 4,000 feet into the air and continued to rain down on the Germans for almost a full minute after the explosion – an explosion which constituted what was then the loudest man-made sound in history.

The crater the mine gouged out of the hillside upon which the Germans had built the Schwaben Höhe was almost 100 feet deep and 450 feet across. The German strongpoint disappeared in the erupting dust. One account also states that nine deep German dug-outs, each capable of holding an officer and thirty-five men, a total of nine officers and 315 men, were also lost in the explosion.

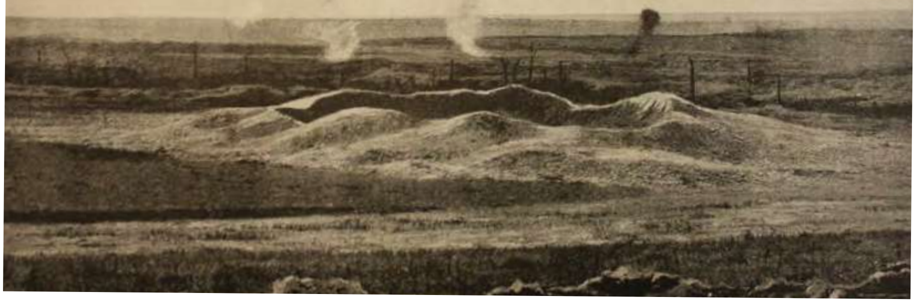
Fusilier Victor Packer of the 1st Battalion, Royal Irish Fusiliers, witnessed the massive explosion: 'The whole village [of La Boisselle] actually lifted up out of the earth. First of all there was a tremendous shake, the earth moved about a yard backwards and forwards, and there were lots of receding vibrations until it became still again. By that time we were all lying flat on the ground, but we got up in time to see the whole of this place lifting up, and I suppose because it was such a big thing it seemed to be incredibly slow.

'It went up as slowly as anything and whole houses started splitting and falling apart in the air. Great elm trees were going up, their roots turning upside down, they must have gone up a tremendous height in the sky. When they reached the top they disintegrated into bits and pieces and dust and clouds, and although we were so far away as it fell, we got pieces of brick and masonry falling into the trench around us.'

The Germans in their deep dugouts on either side of the crater were relatively unaffected and they knew that they had to act quickly to seal this breach in their line. A bitter struggle for possession of the crater lasted all day but British troops, mainly in the form of the 10th Lincolnshire Regiment, were in possession of the crater as night fell on the first day of the Battle of the Somme. The Lochnagar Crater, the largest of its kind up to that time, had achieved its aim, one of the few successes of that fateful day.

'The mine,' reported Captain Henry Hance, the Commanding Officer of 179 Tunnelling Company, 'was wholly successful. An enormous crater was formed, extending considerably behind the enemy trench, which, with its occupants and machine-guns etc, was entirely destroyed for a considerable length, as well as all his dug-outs for a considerable distance beyond the actual crater being entirely closed, and large portions of his trench being buried. There can be no doubt that the mine generally caused him considerable loss, and by the violence of the shock to his garrison, and the shelter afforded by the lips of the crater itself, enabled our attacking infantry to reach his trenches here, and to pass over them in the first assault, with comparatively light loss.'

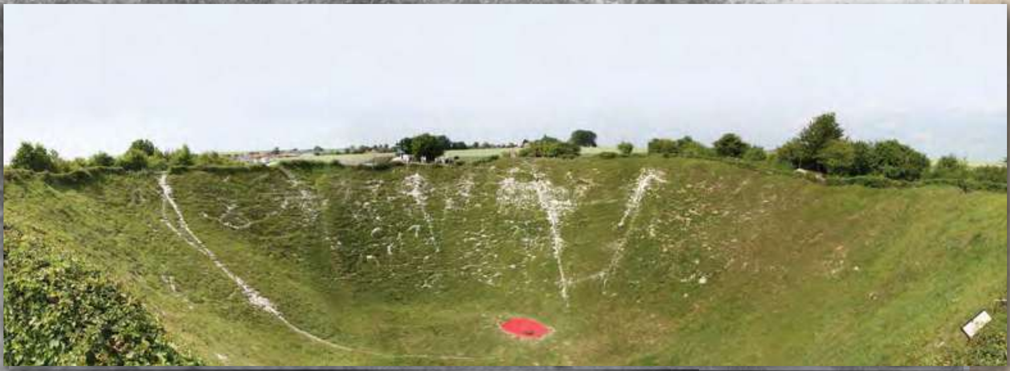
BELOW: Taken on 3 July 1916, this view of the battlefield around La Boisselle was taken from a position north-west of the village looking to the south-east. The crater is not that formed by the Lochnagar Mine, but the one that resulted from the explosion of the Y Sap mine on the opposite side of the Albert-Bapaume road. This area was still on the front line; British shells can be seen bursting around the area of the German trench known as "Alte Jäger Strasse". The lip of Lochnagar Crater is just discernable in the distance.



The losses on the Somme scarred a generation. The Picardie countryside was also ruined and ruptured by the shells and the mines and the Locknagar Crater, preserved for posterity, remains its deepest scar. ●

RIGHT: A panorama of Lochnagar Crater as it is today. The buildings of the rebuilt village of La Boisselle can be seen in the background.

MINE



THE RFC OVER THE SOMME

1 JULY 1916

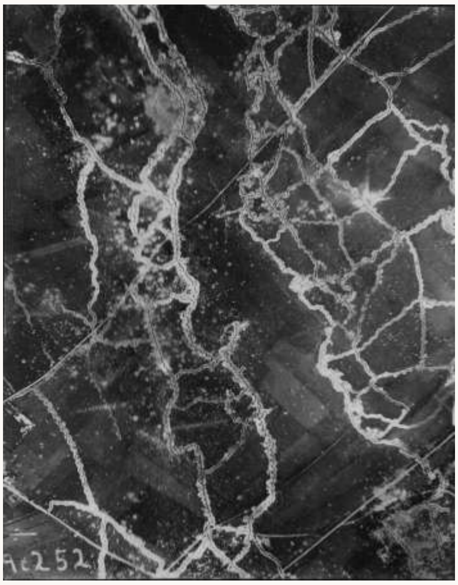
ABOVE: A Royal Flying Corps aeroplane pictured over enemy trenches in France. (ALL IMAGES HISTORIC MILITARY PRESS)

WHEN THE Royal Flying Corps deployed to France at the outbreak of war in 1914 it did so with just four squadrons equipped with twelve aircraft each. Together with aircraft in depots, this gave a total strength of sixty-three aircraft supported by 900 men. By September 1915 and the Battle of Loos, the RFC's strength had increased to twelve squadrons and 161 aircraft. By the time of the first major air actions over the Somme from 1 July 1916 onwards, there were twenty-seven squadrons with 421 aircraft plus a further 216 in depots.

As part of the preparations for the offensive, on 25 June 1916 the Royal Flying Corps carried out a general attack on the enemy's observation balloons, destroying nine of them, and depriving the enemy for the time being of this form of observation. Observation, though, would be a key role for the RFC in the coming days and months.

Generally speaking, the RFC had two main tasks during the Battle of the Somme. The first was to fly reconnaissance missions over the German lines, supporting both infantry attacks and artillery bombardment, whilst the second was to prevent the Germans from flying their own reconnaissance missions in return.

The historian Thomas G. Bradbeer describes events relating to the RFC on 1 July 1916: 'The aircrews of the six squadrons supporting the Fourth Army had been aloft since 0400. As the sun rose and the early morning mist faded away, aerial observers were able to report to the ground units the effect of the bombardment. As the first waves of infantry left their trenches, contact patrols flew between 500 and 1,000 feet overhead, reporting back to each corps and division headquarters on the progress of their units. Aerial observers, most of them flying in the outdated BE 2c, flew along the entire front of the Fourth Army, searching out and locating dozens of German artillery batteries who were now laying down an intense barrage of their own on the advancing British infantry. The airmen sent hundreds of requests for fire and loitered in the air to direct the counter-fire against the enemy artillery units but with hundreds of bursting shells landing seemingly everywhere below them, it became impossible to give more than general corrections.'



ABOVE: A typical aerial reconnaissance photograph obtained by the RFC over the Western Front. No Man's Land can be clearly seen between the two opposing lines of trenches.

Cecil Lewis was one of the RFC pilots on patrol on 1 July. The 3 Squadron airman recalls his duties that day: 'We were to watch the opening of the attack, co-ordinate the infantry flares (the job we had been rehearsing for months), and stay out over the lines for two and a half hours. Before we left, a second machine would overlap us, stay out its two and a half hours, and so continuous patrols would run throughout the day ... Even in the air, at four thousand feet, above the roar of the engine, the drumming of firing and bursting shells throbbed in our ears.'

Lewis had also been warned to keep clear of the area around La Boisselle because of the mine (see page 62). From his height of 4,000 feet he had a clear view of the momentous events unfolding below:

'At Boisselle the earth heaved and flashed, a tremendous and magnificent column rose up into the sky. There was an ear-splitting roar, drowning all the guns, flinging the machine sideways in the repercussing [*sic*] air. The earthly column rose, higher and higher to almost four thousand feet. There it hung, or seemed to hang, for a moment in the air, like the silhouette of some great cypress tree, then fell away in a widening cone of dust and debris. A moment later came the second mine. Again the roar, the up flung machine, the strange gaunt silhouette invading the sky. Then the dust cleared and we saw the two white eyes of the craters. The barrage had lifted to the second-line trenches, the infantry were over the top – the attack had begun.'

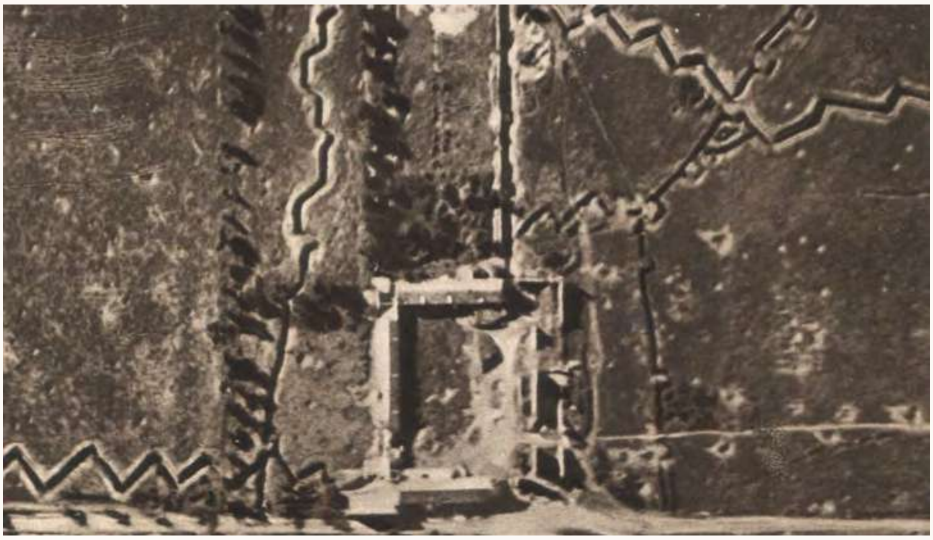
Writing in his despatch after the Battle of the Somme, Haig noted that 'the 'Royal Flying Corps played a highly important part'. He went on to add: 'The admirable work of this Corps has been a very satisfactory feature of the battle. Under the conditions of modern war the duties of the Air Service are many and varied. They include the regulation and control of artillery fire by indicating targets and observing and reporting the results of rounds; the taking of photographs of enemy trenches, strong points, battery positions, and of the effect of bombardments; and the observation of the movements of the enemy behind his lines.

'The greatest skill and daring has been shown in the performance of all these duties, as well as in bombing expeditions. Our Air Service has also co-operated with our infantry in their assaults, signalling the position of our attacking troops and turning machine guns on to the enemy infantry and even on to his batteries in action.

'Not only has the work of the Royal Flying Corps to be carried out in all weathers and under constant fire from the ground, but fighting in the air has now become a normal procedure, in order to maintain the mastery over the enemy's Air Service. In these fights the greatest skill and determination have been shown, and great success has attended the efforts of the Royal Flying Corps. I desire to point out, however, that the maintenance of mastery in the air, which is essential, entails a constant and liberal supply of the most up-to-date machines, without which even the most skilful pilots cannot succeed.'

Some of the statistics for air operations during the Battle of the Somme demonstrate the magnitude of British air power deployed. For example, the figures show that 782 RFC machines were destroyed, lost or damaged, whilst 308 RFC pilots and airmen were killed, wounded or missing. At the same time, 164 German aircraft were destroyed and 205 'driven down'. A staggering 19,000 aerial reconnaissance photographs were taken, 8,612 artillery targets registered and 17,600 (amounting to 292 tons) bombs were dropped.

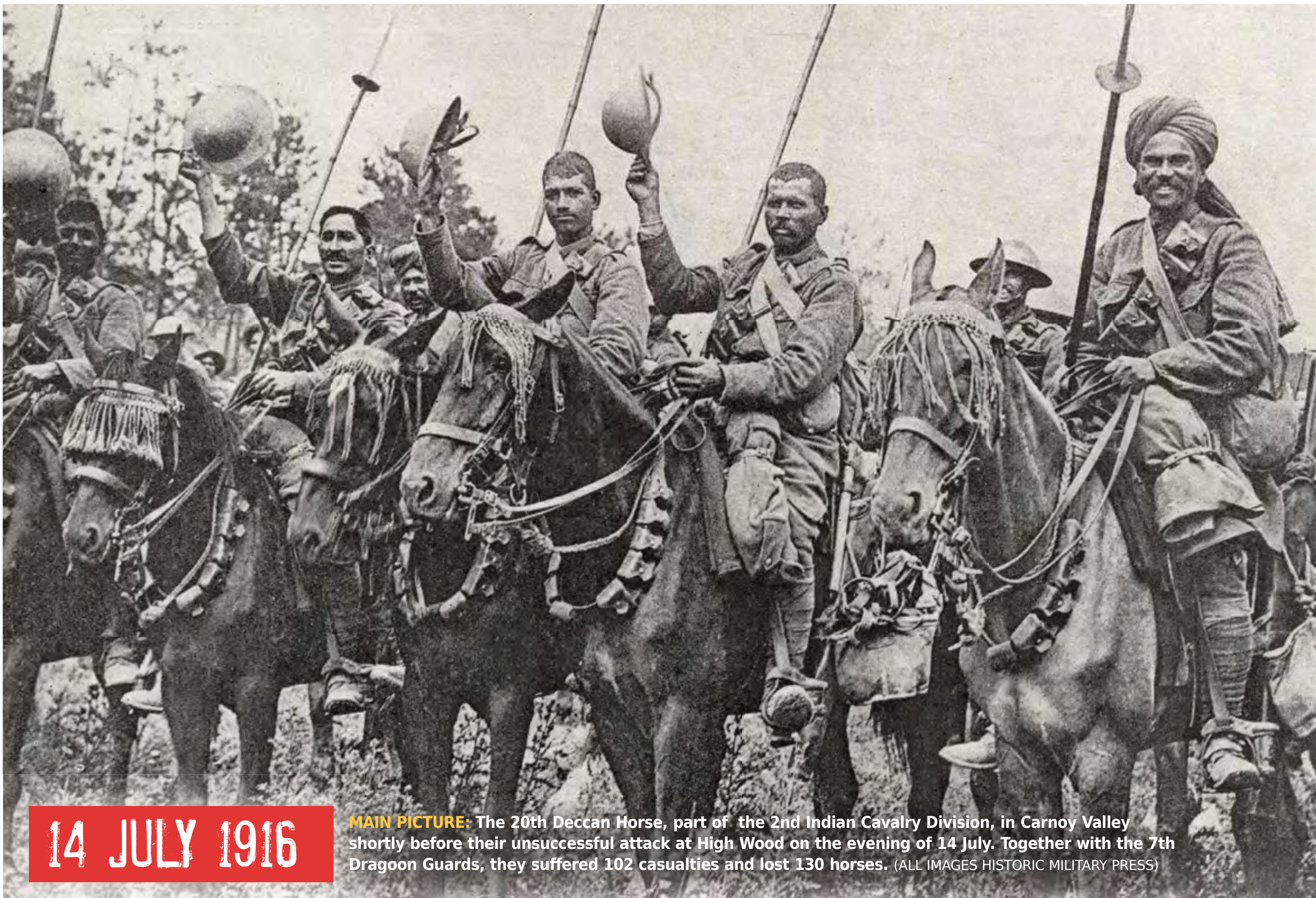
Although the RFC suffered high losses because it rigidly adhered to an offensive strategy throughout the air campaign during the offensive, when the battle ended, the RFC still controlled the skies above the Somme. While the ground campaign failed to accomplish all of its stated objectives, historians have argued that the air campaign was a victory for the RFC. ●



ABOVE: An example of the work of the RFC during the Battle of the Somme. This aerial photograph of Mouquet Farm and its defences (north at top) was taken in June 1916 (North at top). The battered farmhouse buildings are the rectangular area at lower centre. The trench across the top right is the western end of 'Fabeck Graben', whilst the trench at top left, heading NNW, is 'Zollern Redoubt'.

ABOVE: Images such as this were vital to the men fighting on the ground. It was taken not from an aircraft, but a balloon of the RFC's No.1 Kite Balloon Squadron on 1 July 1916.

ABOVE: An example of an Airco DH.2. Designed by Geoffrey de Havilland, the DH.2 was the first effectively armed British single-seat fighter, though because of its sensitive controls, and at a time when service training for pilots in the RFC was very poor, it initially had a high accident rate, gaining it the nickname "The Spinning Incinerator". The arrival at the front of more powerful German biplane fighters, such as the Albastros D.I which appeared in September 1916, meant that the DH.2 became outclassed, though it remained in first line service in France well into 1917.



14 JULY 1916

MAIN PICTURE: The 20th Deccan Horse, part of the 2nd Indian Cavalry Division, in Carnoy Valley shortly before their unsuccessful attack at High Wood on the evening of 14 July. Together with the 7th Dragoon Guards, they suffered 102 casualties and lost 130 horses. (ALL IMAGES HISTORIC MILITARY PRESS)

CAVALRY CHARGE ON THE SOMME

ON FRIDAY, 14 July 1916, the British had launched an attack upon the German positions along the Bazentin Ridge on the Somme and, having taken the enemy by surprise, had achieved considerable success. These advances brought the British within striking distance of Bois de Foureaux (now known as the Bois des Fourcaux) which, although only a few hundred feet in height, was known by the Allies at the time as High Wood because it crowned the summit of the main German defence line through the Flers Ridge to Thiepval and dominated the whole of the surrounding battlefield. An assault on this key position was launched in the early evening.

Hoping for the much-anticipated breakthrough, cavalry, in the form of two squadrons each of the 20th Deccan Horse and the 7th Dragoon Guards of the Secunderabad Cavalry Brigade, were deployed. They would make the only cavalry charge of the Battle of the Somme.

Having formed up in low open ground near to the spot known as Crucifix Corner the cavalry began their assault. Led by the Deccan Horse with levelled lances they charged into heavy machine-gun fire but the attack was brought to a halt.

'No troops could have presented a more inspiring sight than these natives of India with lance and sword, tearing in mad cavalcade onto the skyline,' recorded Captain (later Lieutenant Colonel) Graham Seton Hutchinson. 'A few disappeared over it: they never came back. The remainder became the target of every gun and rifle. Turning their horses' heads, with shrill cries, these masters of horsemanship galloped through a hell of fire, lifting their mounts lightly over yawning shell-holes; turning and twisting through the barrage of great shells: the ranks thinned, not a man escaped.'

Another witness to the cavalry charge was Second Lieutenant F.W. Beadle, an artillery forward observation officer. 'It was an incredible sight,' he recalled, 'an unbelievable sight; they galloped up with their lances and with pennants flying, up the slope to High Wood and straight into it. ... They simply galloped on through all that and horses and men were dropping on the ground, with no hope against the machine guns, because the Germans up on the ridge were firing down into the valley where the soldiers were. It was an absolute rout. A magnificent sight. Tragic.'

One signaller serving with a RGA Heavy Battery, with the surname Ounsworth, also provided the following description of the charge: 'I saw this 'plane, a Morane-Saulnier – a French plane we had at the time, monoplane, kept diving down on to the corner of the field on our left front. I saw this cavalry coming across – I found out afterwards they were the Indians, Deccan Horse they called them ... and this plane was diving down like that and up again and suddenly the officer in charge of cavalry cottoned on and he stood up in his stirrups waved his sword above his head and just charged like that across the field. The two outer lots split like that you see so they made a pincer. The next thing we saw was thirty-four Jerry prisoners [with] some of those heavy machine-guns.'

ABOVE: During the fighting for High Wood, many of the men involved, including those of the 20th Deccan Horse and the 7th Dragoon Guards, gathered near or passed by the location known as Crucifix Corner. Located to the south of the wood at a spot where several tracks and roads intersect just to the north of Bazentin-le-Grand, the original crucifix that stood here in the First World War can still be seen – albeit now hidden in a tiny copse on the roadside. The scars caused through shot and shell can still be seen.

ABOVE: It is perhaps not surprising, given that the 47th Division finally took High Wood on 15 September 1916, that the most imposing memorial at the edge of High Wood is to that division. The original memorial was a wooden cross, which was erected in December 1916, but was taken back to London after the war. A more permanent memorial was dedicated in the 1920s.

Such graphic accounts duly considered, the historian and author David Kenyon provides the following account of what happened: 'As the cavalry advanced across the broad valley behind the German Second Line they were visible to observers on the ridge behind, and to the Germans in Longueval and Delville Wood, as well as to scattered parties of the enemy in the fields between. The regiments came under machine-gun and rifle fire, but sustained relatively few casualties.

'The lead squadron of 7th Dragoon Guards came abreast of the eastern side of High Wood at about 8.00pm. Here a larger concentration of Germans was encountered sheltering in shell holes within a crop of standing corn. The lead squadron, under Lieutenant Pope, charged these troops, who immediately fled. Sixteen Germans were ridden down and 'speared', (the leading squadron of all Indian based regiments being lance armed), while another 32 were made prisoner. In order to retain contact with the infantry attack the Dragoons then halted and taking advantage of a bank along the side of the road from the southern corner of High Wood to Longueval established a defensive line ...

'The Deccan Horse advanced on the right of the Dragoons ... While the regiment was to maintain contact with the Dragoon Guards on the left, their new objective was to support a renewed attack.' This was recalled by a participant, Lieutenant Colonel Tennant:

'As each squadron cleared the defile it formed line and advanced at a gallop in the direction taken by the advanced guard, which lay through a broad belt of standing corn, in which small parties of the enemy lay concealed. Individual Germans now commenced popping up on all sides, throwing up their arms and shouting "Kamerad" and not a few, evidently under the impression that no quarter would be given, flung their arms around the horses necks and begged for mercy – all of which impeded the advance.'

In due course, as darkness fell at around 21.30 hours, the Deccan Horse withdrew and took up a defensive position extending the line already established by 7th Dragoon Guards along the High Wood to Longueval road. The charge had resulted in eight cavalrymen being killed about 100 wounded, whilst some 130 horses were killed or wounded.

At midnight on the 14th, the Germans counterattacked in High Wood. The Allied troops were unable to hold on and soon, except for the north-eastern corner, the Germans held it again. Further infantry attacks were made on the 15th in an effort to capture the wood, but by the end of the day the enemy was still in control of most of High Wood. They would remain so for a further two months – it was not until the early hours of 15 September 1916 that High Wood was completely in Allied hands.

As for the mounted cavalry, they would play no further part in the Somme battles in 1916. ●

RIGHT: A British soldier poses lying reading on an abandoned German stretcher in High Wood, a photograph that clearly shows the effects of the shelling and fighting in this area between July and October 1916.

ABOVE: A view of High Wood today – as seen from what would have been the general area of the British front line before the start of the attack on 14 July 1916.

THE BATTLE OF DELVILLE WOOD

15 JULY 1916

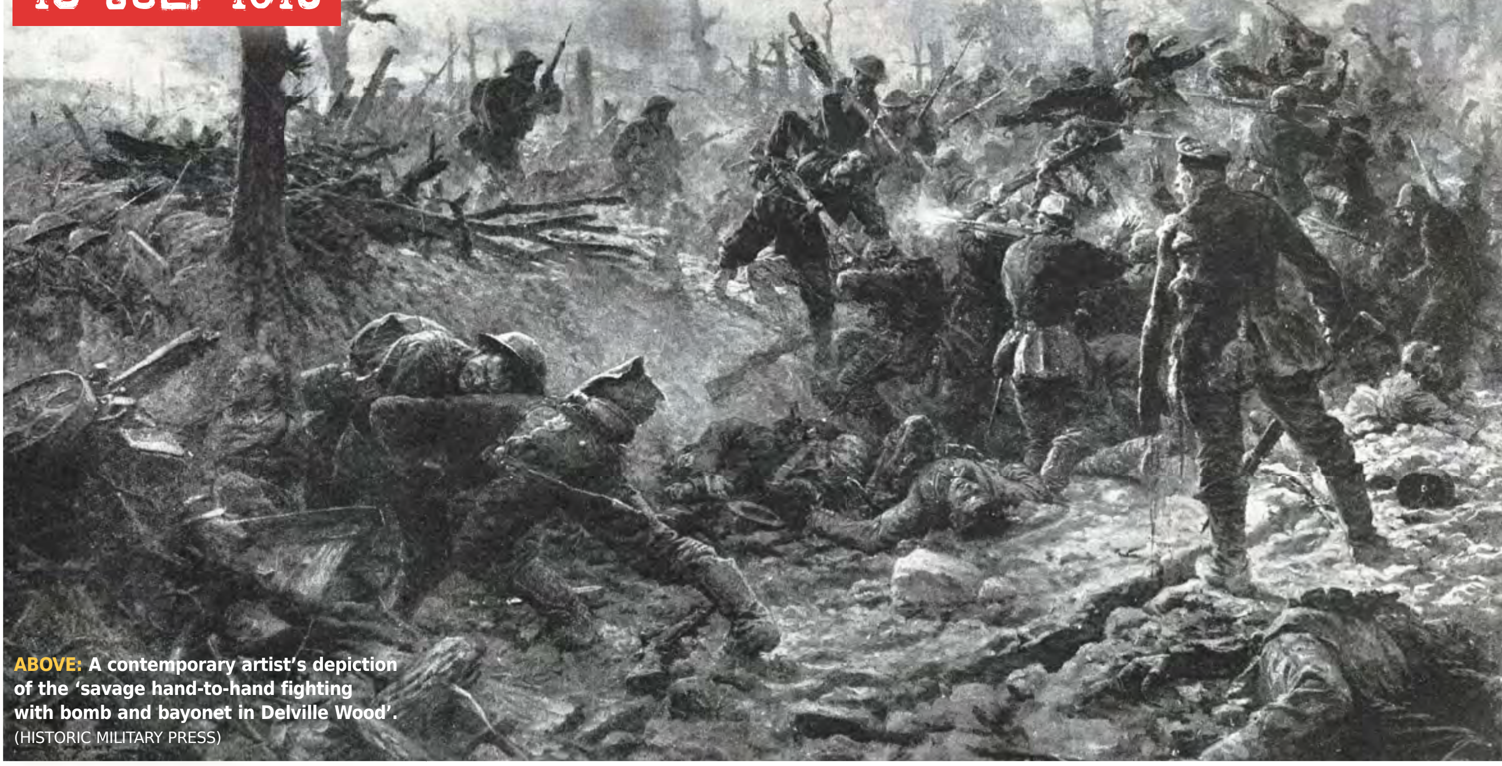
THE OFFENSIVE on the Somme had raged for two weeks, though on 15 July the fighting was, wrote General Sir Douglas Haig in his despatch in December 1916, 'on a reduced scale'. That aside, he added, on this day 'Arrow Head Copse, between the southern edge of Trones Wood and Guillemont, and Waterlot Farm on the Longueval-Guillemont Road, were seized, and Delville Wood was captured and held against several hostile counterattacks'. This statement, however, does little justice to the bitter fighting that was seen at many of these locations.

The Bois d'Elville, or Delville Wood (as it was nicknamed 'Devils Wood' by the troops), lies close to the village of Longueval, from where it is well sign-posted. The wood, the northern part of which lay on a reverse slope, consisted of 'a thick tangle of trees, chiefly oak and birch, with dense hazel thickets intersected by grassy rides, covering about 156 acres'.

Following a successful Allied attack on 14 July, the British front line formed a salient, the right side of which was threatened by Delville Wood, the northern edge by the uncaptured portions of Longueval village. 'This pronounced salient invited counterattacks by the enemy,' wrote Haig. 'He possessed direct observation on it all round from Guillemont on the south-east to High Wood on the northwest. He could bring a concentric fire of artillery to bear not only on the wood and village, but also on the confined space behind, through which ran the French communications as well as ours, where great numbers of guns, besides ammunition and impedimenta of all sorts, had necessarily to be crowded together. Having been in occupation of this ground for nearly two years he knew every foot of it, and could not fail to appreciate the possibilities of causing us heavy loss there by indirect artillery fire; while it was evident that, if he could drive in the salient in our line and so gain direct observation on to the ground behind, our position in that area would become very uncomfortable.'

Before any further eastward attacks could be made by the Allies, it was vital that the whole of Longueval and Delville Wood were captured. The task of clearing the latter of German defenders was handed to the South African Brigade – they were told to take it at all costs. Closely following an artillery barrage, the South Africans advanced into the wood at dawn on 15 July. What followed was one of the most chaotic and vicious battles of the Somme campaign. The Springboks eventually committed all four of their infantry battalions to the fighting and were sucked into a fight to the death with the woods' equally determined

ABOVE: An abandoned German trench in Delville Wood, September 1916. (HISTORIC MILITARY PRESS)



ABOVE: A contemporary artist's depiction of the 'savage hand-to-hand fighting with bomb and bayonet in Delville Wood'. (HISTORIC MILITARY PRESS) defenders. The South African Brigade fed 3,150 men to the attack. Five days later, after a titanic struggle, 143 exhausted South Africans emerged from the wood.

Philip Gibbs served as one of five official British reporters during the First World War. Of Delville Wood, he wrote the following description for *The Daily Chronicle*: 'They advanced in scattered groups in extended order, but keeping in touch – scrambling and crawling forward. There were not two yards of ground without a shell hole, while fallen trees and bushwood made a tangled maze of obstacles everywhere. The troops, heavily loaded with fighting kit, and with bombs slung to their belts, progressed slowly through the infernal wood, which was taken four times by waves of British and retaken four times by German waves. It had been a dumping ground for most furious bombardments.

ABOVE: **A bronze plaque depicting the fighting in Deville Wood which can be seen on the Cenotaph in Heerengracht Street, Cape Town.**

ABOVE: **Delville Wood today.** (COURTESY OF NORMAN DATE)

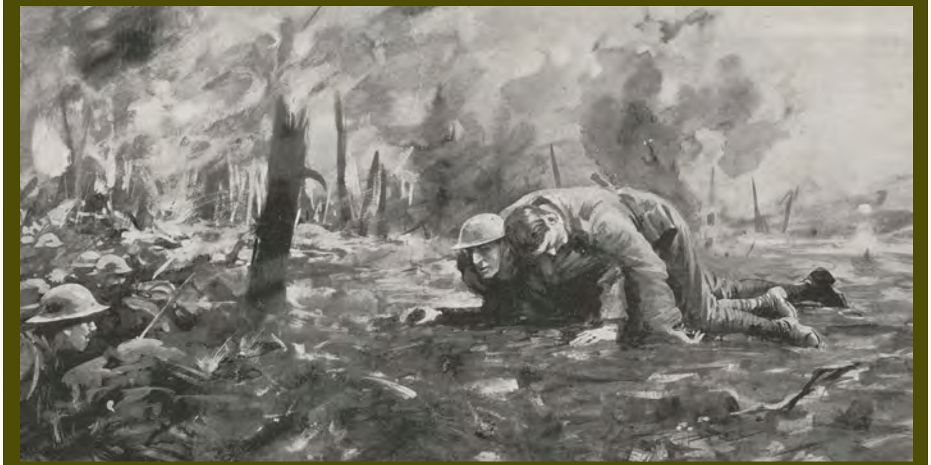
'The British therefore advanced through a great graveyard of unburied dead. The ghostliness of the place left its mark on the minds of men who were not troubled much by the sights of battle. Many would wince at the mention of Delville Wood. Those slashed trees, naked trenches, smoking shell holes, and charred timber, intermingled with blood-stained bundles, once held life, and now make a nightmare.'

Captain S.J. Worsley, DSO, MC was one of the many who found themselves fighting in Delville Wood: 'Every semblance of a trench seemed full of dead-sodden, squelchy, swollen bodies. Fortunately the blackening faces were invisible except when Verey lights lit up the indescribable scene. Not a tree stood whole in that wood. Several, including myself, had dysentery, and that in a ghastly battered trench with no prospect of medical attention. After all, we stood and lay on putrefying bodies and the wonder was that the disease did not finish off what the shells of the enemy had started. There was hand-to-hand fighting with knives, bombs, and bayonets; cursing and brutality on both sides such as men can be responsible for when it is a question of "your life or mine"; mud and filthy stench; dysentery and unattended wounds; shortage of food and water and ammunition.'

Mirroring the sights witnessed by Philip Gibbs and Captain Worsley, one un-named German Officer wrote this description of Delville Wood after the fighting: '[It] had disintegrated into a shattered wasteland of shattered trees, charred and burning stumps, craters thick with mud and blood, and corpses, corpses everywhere. In places they were piled four deep. Worst of all was the lowing of the wounded. It sounded like a cattle ring at the spring fair.'

The battle officially ended on 3 September 1916 with an Allied victory. The original Delville Wood had, however, been totally devastated; in fact only one of the original trees remains alive today. The entire wood has been replanted and is now a memorial park dedicated to the sacrifice of the South African nation in both world wars and in Korea. The *Official History of the Great War* records the courage of the South Africans holding the wood: 'The South Africans had covered themselves with glory at Delville Wood, which is now laid out as a memorial to their dead. In spite of terrible losses, they had steadfastly endured the ordeal of the German bombardment, which seldom slackened and never ceased, and had faced with great courage and resolution repeated counter-attacks delivered by fresh [German] troops. Since their first advance into the wood on the morning of 15th July they had defied all attempts to drive them completely from it.' ●

VICTORIA CROSSES AT DELVILLE WOOD



Five Victoria Crosses were awarded for actions during the fighting at Delville Wood. One of the recipients was Captain William Frederick Faulds VC, MC. At the time he gained his award on 18 July, Faulds was serving as a Private in the 1st Battalion (Cape) of the South African Infantry Brigade. A contemporary account provides the following description: 'A bombing party attempted to rush across the ground between the British and enemy trenches, but in doing so the officer, Lieutenant Craig, and the majority of his men were killed or wounded. Lieutenant Craig was unable to move, and in full daylight Private William Frederick Faulds, of the South African Infantry, and two others, climbed over the parapet, ran out, picked up the officer and carried him back, one man being severely wounded in doing so. Two days later Faulds again showed most conspicuous bravery in going out alone to bring in a wounded man.' (IMAGE: HISTORIC MILITARY PRESS)

DISASTER AT FROMELLES

19 JULY 1916

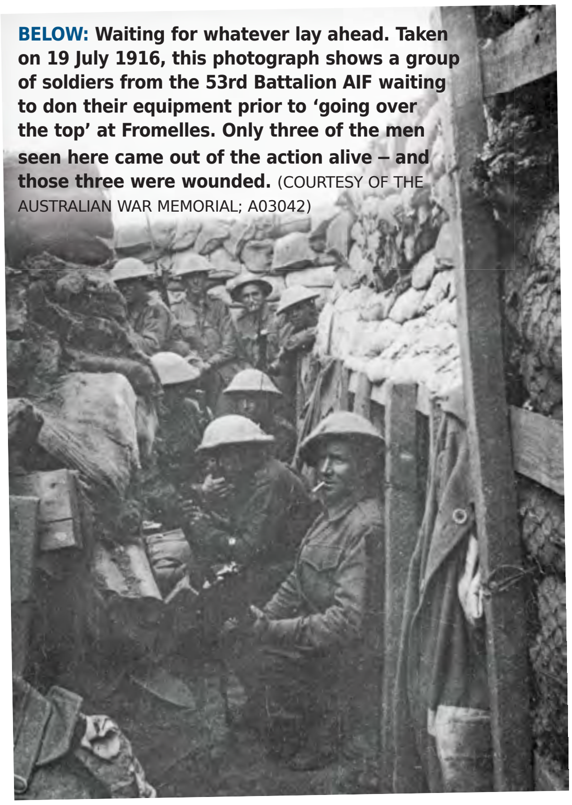
IN A bid to draw German troops away from the battle raging to the south on the Somme, it was proposed by General Haig that a diversionary attack should be made at another point in the line. The location that was selected was where the First Army and the Second Army sectors met. This was in the area of Laventie some forty miles to the north of the Somme battlefield.

The plan was that a joint operation, involving infantry divisions from both armies, would capture the dominating Aubers Ridge, including the German-held villages of Aubers and Fromelles. As with the disastrous events of the first day of the Somme, the offensive would begin with a massive artillery bombardment followed by an infantry attack. It did not work on the Somme yet the same tactics were to be employed at Laventie – with the same terrible result.

The attack would be delivered by the British 61st Division and the Australian 5th Division. Though containing six brigades each of four battalions, both divisions were instructed to commit only a quarter of their numbers in the initial assault – which amounted to approximately 5,000 men.

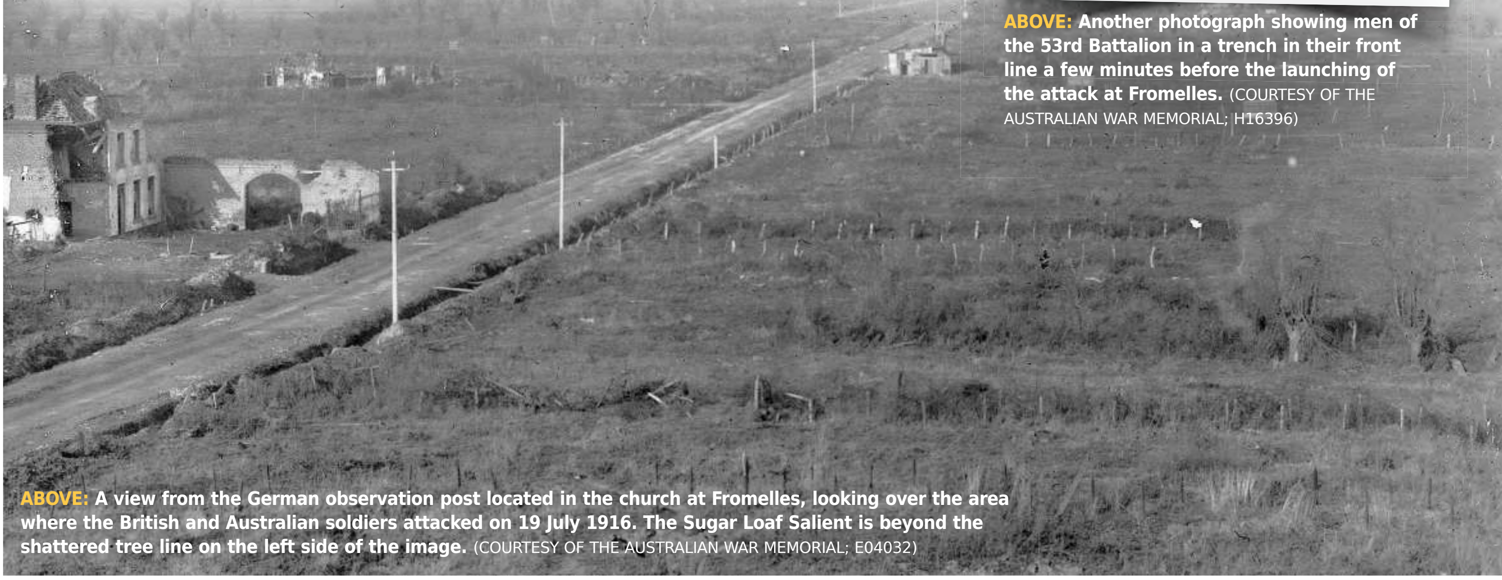
Occupying the German Aubers/Fromelles line was the 6th Bavarian Reserve Division which numbered around 12,000 men. The Germans had been in occupation of these positions since the spring of 1915 and there had been little fighting in that sector for the whole of the previous fourteen months. The Germans had had plenty of time to develop their defences which included many concrete machine-gun emplacements and trenches dug deep into the ground.

The centre of the line which was to be attacked was held by the 16th Bavarian Reserve Regiment. Along their 2,000-yard front the Bavarians had built seventy-five concrete emplacements, the strongest of which were sited upon their main defensive work known to the Allies as the Sugar Loaf Salient. This was a bastion-like fortification that protruded beyond the German line, enabling it's machine-guns to cover the entire length of the 16th's sector.

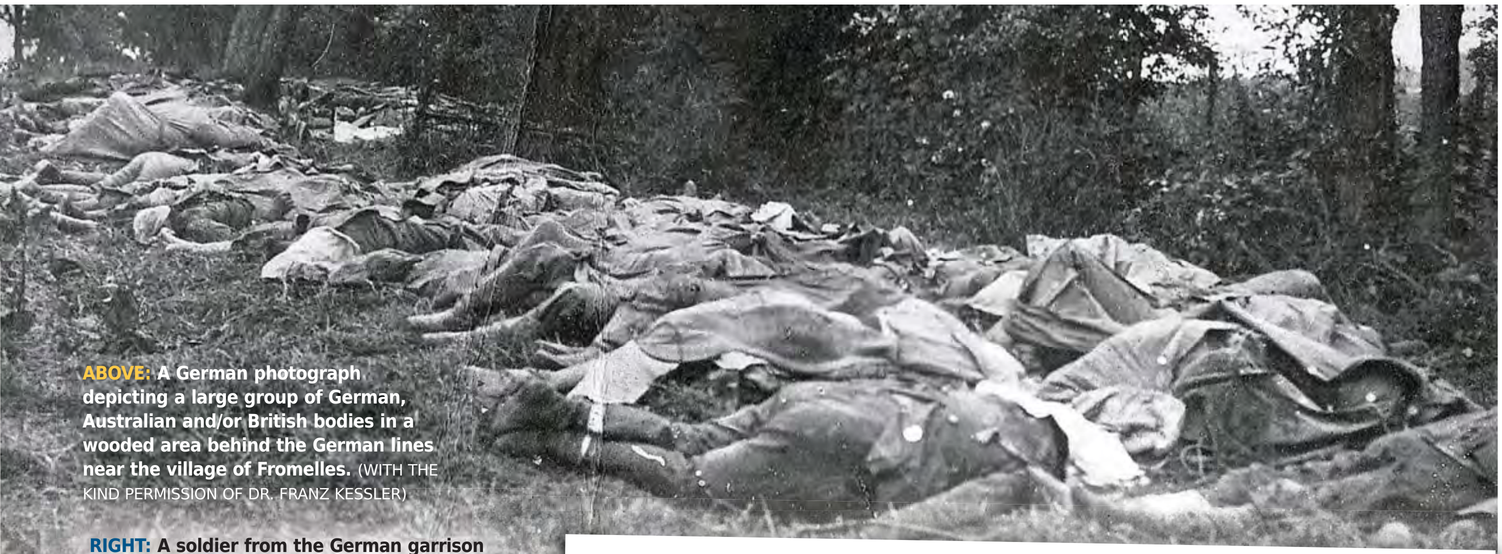


BELOW: Waiting for whatever lay ahead. Taken on 19 July 1916, this photograph shows a group of soldiers from the 53rd Battalion AIF waiting to don their equipment prior to 'going over the top' at Fromelles. Only three of the men seen here came out of the action alive – and those three were wounded. (COURTESY OF THE AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL; A03042)

ABOVE: Another photograph showing men of the 53rd Battalion in a trench in their front line a few minutes before the launching of the attack at Fromelles. (COURTESY OF THE AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL; H16396)



ABOVE: A view from the German observation post located in the church at Fromelles, looking over the area where the British and Australian soldiers attacked on 19 July 1916. The Sugar Loaf Salient is beyond the shattered tree line on the left side of the image. (COURTESY OF THE AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL; E04032)



ABOVE: **A German photograph depicting a large group of German, Australian and/or British bodies in a wooded area behind the German lines near the village of Fromelles.** (WITH THE KIND PERMISSION OF DR. FRANZ KESSLER)

RIGHT: **A soldier from the German garrison at Fromelles, pictured, with the village's badly damaged church as a backdrop. This area was held at the time by the 6th Bavarian Reserve Division.** (WITH THE KIND PERMISSION OF DR. FRANZ KESSLER)

Such formidable defences could only be overcome if they were severely damaged beforehand. For this all the artillery from the two assault divisions, reinforced by other guns from the First and Second armies would be employed. Altogether 374 guns and howitzers were to be used along the 4,200-yard enemy front. This was an even greater density of ordnance per mile than had been deployed before the first attack of the Somme on 1 July. An astonishing 219,350 rounds of shells were available for the bombardment and it prompted Lieutenant General Sir Richard Haking, C-in-C XI Corps, to optimistically pronounce that 'the narrow depth of the attack should make it possible, with the ammunition available, to reduce the defenders to a state of collapse before the assault'.

The attack was scheduled for 04.00 hours on 17 July; the preliminary bombardment began on the morning of the 14th. Strangely, on the 16th – only two days after the bombardment had begun and just twenty-four hours before the attack would commence – Major General Butler, Sir Douglas Haig's deputy chief of the general staff, told Haking that there was 'no urgent need' for the operation to take place. More amazing than this is the fact that one of Haig's staff officers had viewed the Sugar Loaf from the Australian trenches and had concluded that 'the attack could hardly fail to end in disaster'!

Despite the fact that Haig no longer considered the attack to be necessary and that rain and poor visibility had prevented accurate shelling of the German positions, Haking still ordered the assault to go ahead. There was a delay of two days to allow the artillery to make up some of the time lost through the bad weather which meant that the revised date for the attack was 19 July.

The bombardment certainly appeared from a distance to have been highly effective, as Ivor Stewart-Liberty of the 2/1st Bucks observed: 'We had only to peer over the top to be filled with an unholy joy at the sight of the German trenches. Our "stuff" was churning up the German lines into mere mounds of earth, and their losses must have been terrible.'

Reports from patrols sent into No Man's Land on the night before the attack painted a somewhat different picture. The German barbed-wire had only been broken in a few places by the bombardment and the wire around the Sugar Loaf was fully intact.

The attack was timed for 18.00 hours. At Zero hour, the Allied troops attacked: 'With a cheer the two waves leapt up and assaulted the enemy trenches,' states the entry in the 2/1st Bucks War Diary. 'The enemy's machine-guns had become busy and at 6.00 p.m. they mowed down our advancing waves so that only a few men actually reached the German parapet. These men did not return.'

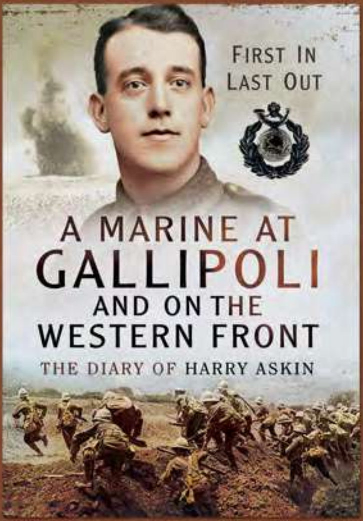
For the men of the Australian Imperial Force (AIF), Fromelles was to be their baptism of fire on the Western Front – although other divisions from 1 ANZAC had been deployed to the Somme, they had not yet been committed.

One 'Digger' who survived, W.H. 'Jimmy' Downing, later recalled that the 'air was thick with bullets, swishing in a flat, criss-crossed lattice of death. Hundreds were mown down in the flicker of an eyelid, like great rows of teeth knocked from a comb.'

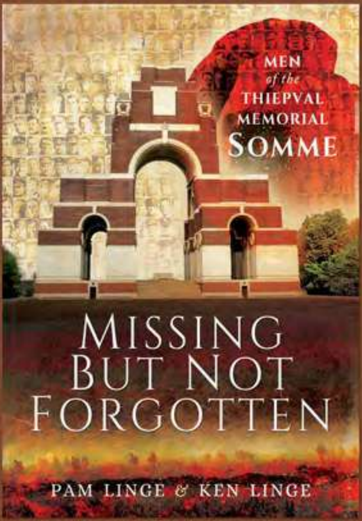
One observer recalled a 'most awful scene of slaughter imaginable'. Corporal Hugh Knyvett of the 59th Battalion AIF recalled the devastation in and around the trenches of the Australian 15th Brigade: 'If you had gathered the stock of a thousand butcher-shops, cut it into small pieces and strewn it about, it would give you a faint conception of the shambles those trenches were.'

Though small sections of the German trenches were captured by the 8th and 14th Australian Brigades – devoid of flanking support and subjected to fierce counter-attacks they were forced to withdraw – by 08.00 hours on 20 July 1916, the battle was over. For the Australians in particular, casualties had been heavy. Within a matter of hours, 5,533 were dead, wounded or missing – the worst ever twenty-four hour period in the history of the Australian Army. For the British, 1,500 were killed or wounded. The attack, intended as a diversion to prevent German withdrawals from the area to bolster their defences on the Somme, was an abject failure. ●

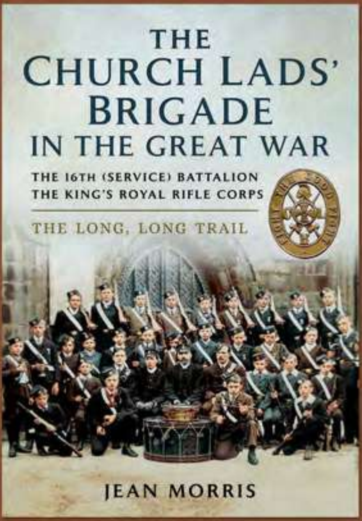
PEN & SWORD BOOKS


FIRST IN LAST OUT
A MARINE AT GALLIPOLI AND ON THE WESTERN FRONT
THE DIARY OF HARRY ASKIN

WAS £25.00 NOW £20.00


MEN of the THIEPVAL MEMORIAL SOMME
MISSING BUT NOT FORGOTTEN
PAM LINGE & KEN LINGE

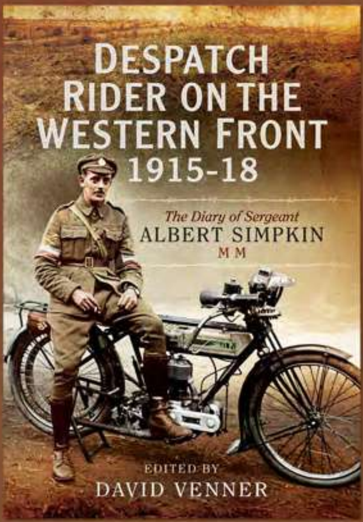
WAS £25.00 NOW £20.00


THE CHURCH LADS' BRIGADE IN THE GREAT WAR
THE 16TH (SERVICE) BATTALION THE KING'S ROYAL RIFLE CORPS
THE LONG, LONG TRAIL
JEAN MORRIS

WAS £25.00 NOW £20.00

LADY UNDER FIRE ON THE WESTERN FRONT
The Great War Letters of Lady Dorothie Feilding MM
Edited by Andrew & Nicola Hallam

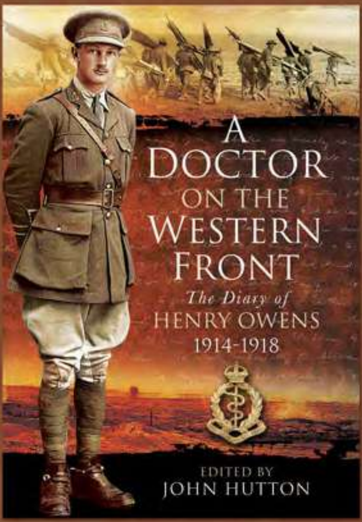
WAS £19.99 NOW £15.99


DESPATCH RIDER ON THE WESTERN FRONT 1915-18
The Diary of Sergeant ALBERT SIMPKIN MM
EDITED BY DAVID VENNER

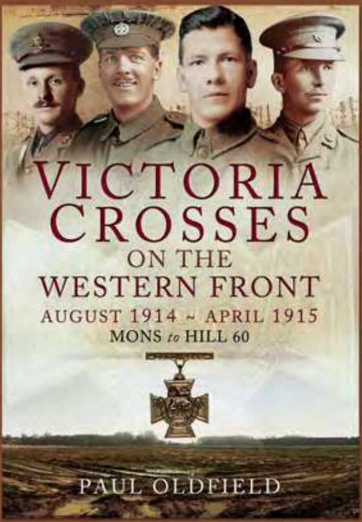
WAS £19.99 NOW £15.99

FINAL WICKET
TEST & FIRST-CLASS CRICKETERS KILLED in THE GREAT WAR
NIGEL McCRERY

WAS £30.00 NOW £24.00


A DOCTOR ON THE WESTERN FRONT
The Diary of HENRY OWENS 1914-1918
EDITED BY JOHN HUTTON

WAS £19.99 NOW £15.99


VICTORIA CROSSES ON THE WESTERN FRONT
AUGUST 1914 ~ APRIL 1915
MONS to HILL 60
PAUL OLDFIELD

WAS £25.00 NOW £20.00

Quote "249118" to receive your discount

Visit **www.pen-and-sword.co.uk**
to view our full range of titles
Pen & Sword Books LTD, 47
Church Street, Barnsley, S70 2AS
TEL: 01226 734222
UK Postage £4.00 • Airmail £8.00

ABOVE: A busy scene in Sausage Valley on the Somme, with Anzac troops on the move during the fighting near Pozières. (COURTESY OF THE AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL; EZ0113)

23 JULY 1916

AUSTRALIANS ON THE SOMME

ABOVE: Members of the 5th and 6th Brigades resting in Pozières in July 1916. (COURTESY OF THE AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL; EZ0074)

THE VILLAGE of Pozières sat on the highest point of the German second defensive trench line along the British sector of the Somme. It was an outpost in front of what was known as the German O.G. Lines and its tactical importance resulted in the village being powerfully defended by the enemy. Its capture had not been possible on the opening day of the Battle of the Somme, but Field Marshal Haig and General Rawlinson believed that they could take Pozières by a 'steady, methodical, step-by-step advance'.

This was attempted throughout 13 to 17 July by Rawlinson's Fourth Army with a number of small attacks against Pozières, but this met with no success and resulted in high casualties. The village was subjected to a heavy bombardment and was reduced to nothing but rubble, yet it remained as securely held as ever. It was quickly realised that these limited attacks were unlikely to ever capture the village. Instead a large effort would have to be undertaken. This would be entrusted to Lieutenant General Hubert Gough's Reserve Army, to which were attached three Australian divisions of 1 Anzac Corps. The attack was scheduled for the night of 22/23 July.

BELOW: The Pozières battlefield. In the distance, the village of Contalmaison is being pounded by German artillery. (COURTESY OF THE AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL; EZ0084)

The German positions had been continuously bombarded, though at a 'slow' pace, during the days between 18 July and the start of the Reserve Army's attack. The fire intensified on the day of the attack, as described by the Australian historian Charles Bean: 'On Saturday afternoon our heavy shells were tearing at regular intervals into the rear of the brick heaps which once were houses, and flinging up branches of trees and great clouds of black earth from the woods. A German letter was found next day dated "In Hell's Trenches." It added: "It is not really a trench, but a little ditch, shattered with shells – not the slightest cover and no protection. We have lost 50 men in two days, and life is unendurable." White puffs of shrapnel from field guns were lathering the place persistently, so that when the German trenches were broken down it was difficult to repair them or move in them.'

As the troops prepared to go over the top, the bombardment reached its climax. 'That night, shortly after dark, there broke out the most fearful bombardment I have ever seen. As one walked towards the battlefield, the weirdly shattered woods and battered houses stood out almost all the time against ▶▶

one continuous band of flickering light along the eastern skyline,' continued Charles Bean. 'There must have been fierce fire upon Pozières, too, for the Germans were replying to it, hailing the roads with shrapnel and trying to fill the hollows with gas shell. They must have suspected an attack upon this part of their line as well, and were trying to hamper the reserves from moving into position.'

In fierce fighting the Australians took the village and then tried to penetrate the O.G. Lines but found the Germans too well entrenched and well-armed with a high concentration of machine-guns. The village was secured by 24 July and as soon as the Germans were aware that Pozières had been lost, they responded with enormous ferocity. 'All that happened there was that, from the time when the first day broke and found the Pozières position practically ours, the enemy turned his guns on to it. Hour after hour – day and night – with increasing intensity as the days went on, he rained heavy shell into the area. It was the sight of the battlefield for miles around – that reeking village,' continued Charles Bean. 'Now he would send them crashing in on a line south of the road – eight heavy shells at a time, minute after minute, followed up by burst upon burst of shrapnel. Now he would place a curtain, straight across this valley or that, till the sky and landscape were blotted out, except for fleeting glimpses seen as through a lift of fog. Gas shell, musty with chloroform; sweet-scented tear shell that made your eyes run with water; high bursting shrapnel with black smoke and a vicious high explosive rattle behind its heavy pellets; ugly green bursts the colour of a fat silkworm; huge black clouds from the high explosive of his 5.9s. Day and night the men worked through it, fighting this horrid machinery far over the horizon as if they were fighting Germans hand-to-hand – building up whatever it battered down; buried, some of them, not once but again and again and again.'

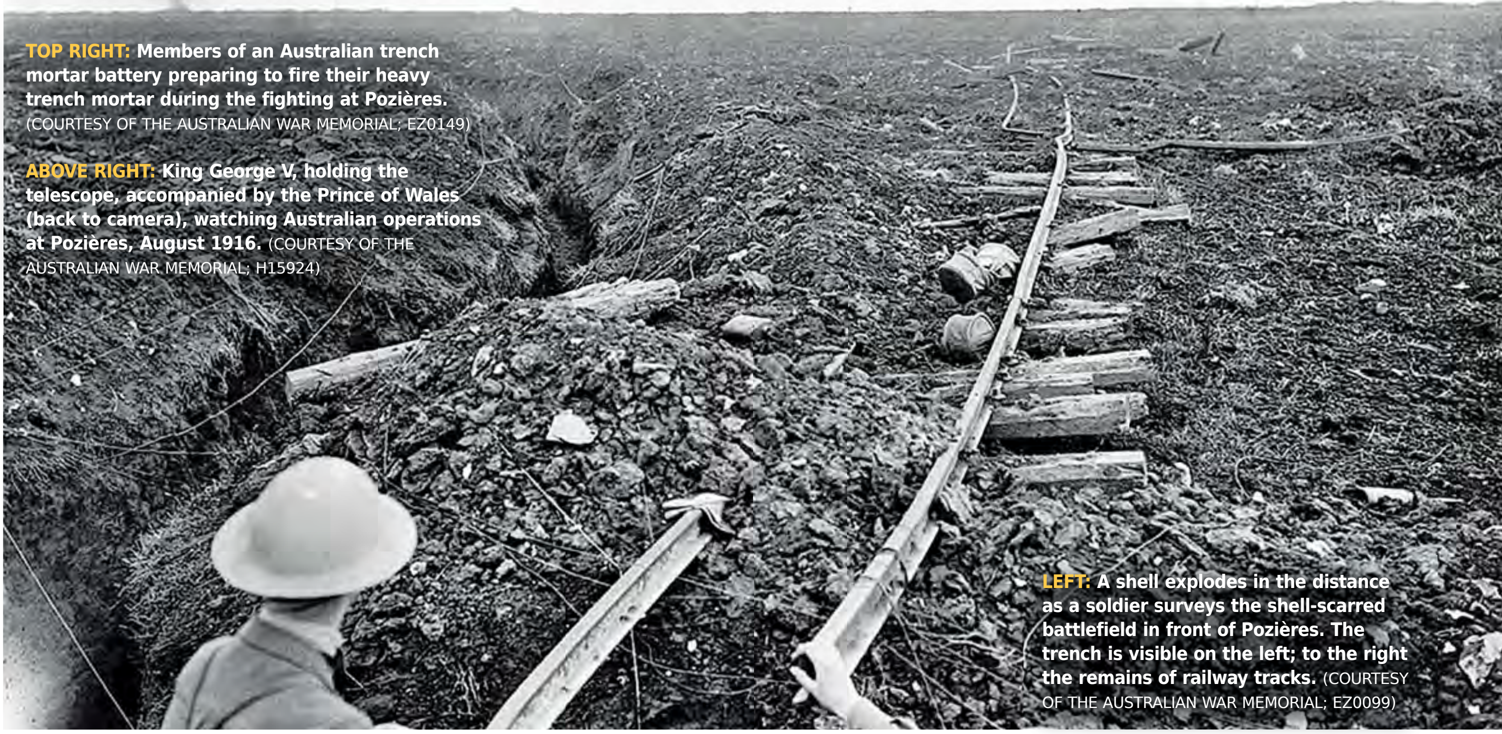
The German bombardment was supposed to be a preliminary to a counter-attack but this was cancelled, the German commander of IX Corps deciding instead of throwing men at the village to concentrate on holding the O.G Lines. Pozières therefore remained in Allied hands.

Gough renewed the attack upon the O.G. Lines on 29 July and the fighting continued into the first week of August, and further successes were recorded. German positions north-west of Pozières between Bazentin-le-Petit and Martinpuich, near to Mouquet Farm, and to the west of Guillemont, were taken. On 18 August a steady push was made all along the line from Thiepval to the Somme, and the Leipzig Redoubt was captured after another heavy artillery bombardment. The Germans undertook repeated counter-attacks but all of these were repulsed.

The first day of the Battle of the Somme had not produced the breakthrough of the German positions that had been hoped for, but gradually, one by one, the objectives set for that day were being taken by the British and Commonwealth troops.

Every little advance, though, bought with it a terrible loss of life, added to those that had preceded it, and the accumulation of these small successes drove the Germans further and further back and eroded still more their confidence and morale.

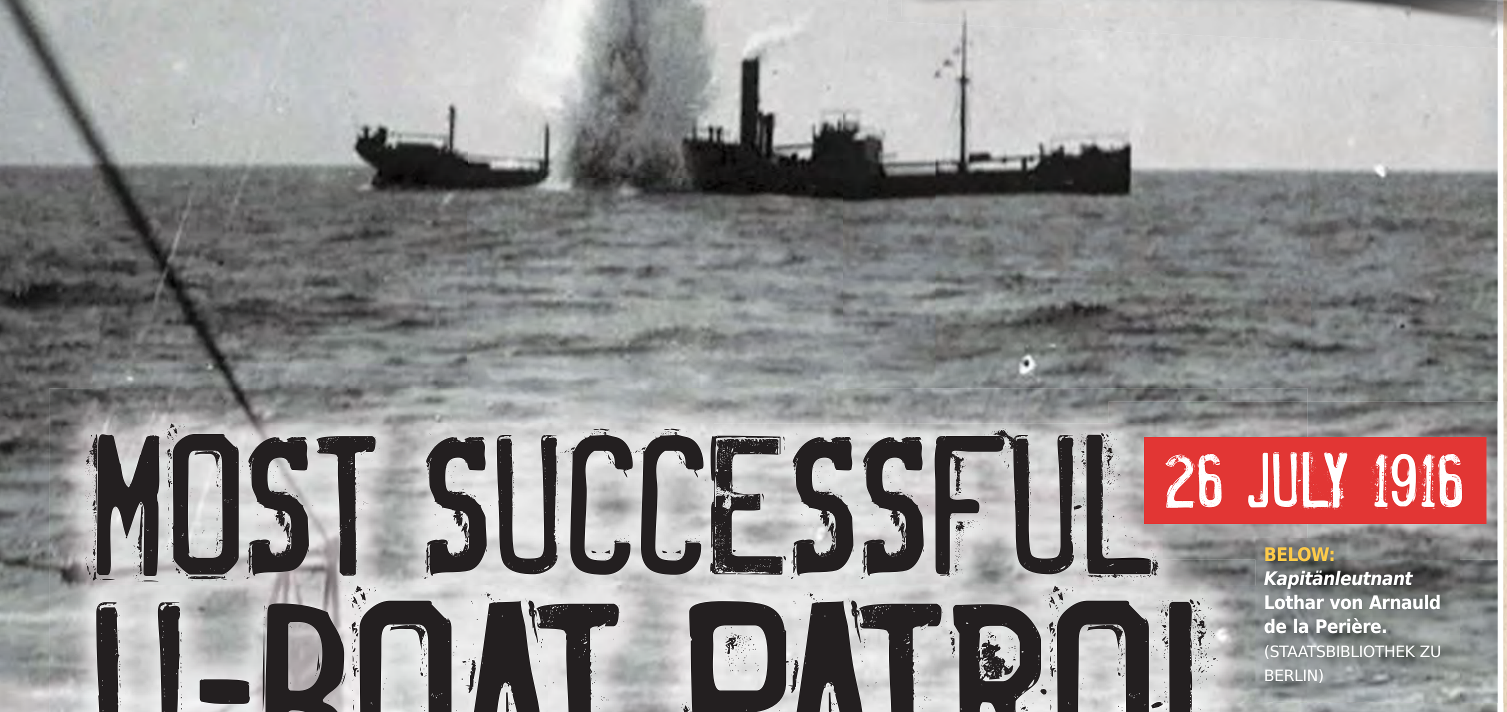
As for 1 Anzac Corps, it suffered around 23,000 casualties in the Battle of Pozières which officially ended on 3 September. It was the Australians' and New Zealanders' first major involvement in the Battle of the Somme and according to Charles Bean the place 'is more densely sown with Australian sacrifice than any other place on earth'. ●



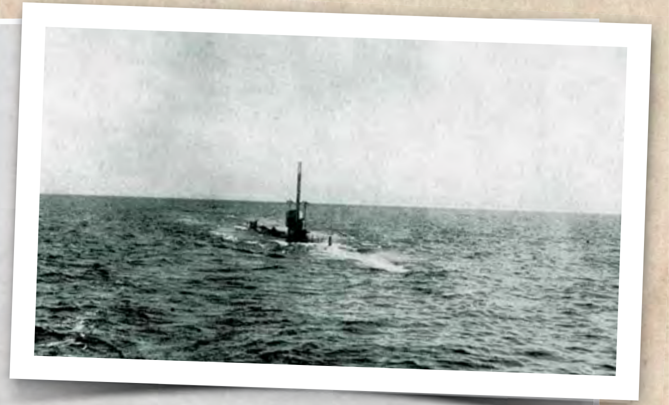
TOP RIGHT: Members of an Australian trench mortar battery preparing to fire their heavy trench mortar during the fighting at Pozières. (COURTESY OF THE AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL; EZ0149)

ABOVE RIGHT: King George V, holding the telescope, accompanied by the Prince of Wales (back to camera), watching Australian operations at Pozières, August 1916. (COURTESY OF THE AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL; H15924)

LEFT: A shell explodes in the distance as a soldier surveys the shell-scarred battlefield in front of Pozières. The trench is visible on the left; to the right the remains of railway tracks. (COURTESY OF THE AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL; EZ0099)



MAIN PICTURE: One of *U-35*'s many victims in the First World War. This is the British cargo ship SS *Maplewood* under attack on 7 April 1917, forty-seven nautical miles south-west of Sardinia. (DEUTSCHES BUNDESARCHIV)



TOP RIGHT: *U-35* underway in the Mediterranean.

MOST SUCCESSFUL U-BOAT PATROL

26 JULY 1916

BELOW: *Kapitänleutnant* Lothar von Arnauld de la Perière. (STAATSBIBLIOTHEK ZU BERLIN)

ON WEDNESDAY, 26 July 1916, the U-31-Type U-boat *U-35* put to sea on her fourteenth patrol. Under the command of *Kapitänleutnant* Lothar von Arnauld de la Perière, it commenced a cruise from Cattaro towards the Spanish waters of the western Mediterranean.

It had been a good year so far for de la Perière. During a five-week patrol in April and May 1916, his crew had sunk twenty-three ships totalling 68,000 tons. Prior to that *U-35* had successfully torpedoed and sunk the French armed merchant cruiser *La Provence*, which was carrying 1,800 French troops, near Cerigo Island on 26 February 1916. A report in the *Sydney Morning Herald* stated that 'a battalion of the Third Colonial Infantry was aboard. There was no lamentation, and there was no panic, though the ship was sinking rapidly and the boilers exploding. Captain Vesco ... remained on the bridge, calmly giving orders, and finally cried, "Adieu, mes enfants." The men clustered on the foredeck, and replied, "Vive la France." Then the *Provence* made a sudden plunge, and the foredeck rose perpendicularly above the water.' A total of 990 men were lost.

De la Perière's first victim since setting out on the 26th was the Italian merchant vessel SS *Dandalo* which was encountered and sunk fifty nautical miles south-east of Cape Spartivento on 28 July. *Dandalo* was to be the first of many during the next twenty days. Two days later it was the British cargo ship *Britannic*, sunk off Cap Bon in Algeria. The SS *Ethelbryhta*, another British merchant vessel, was shelled and sunk later the same day, to be followed, before midnight, by a further two ships.

The sinkings kept on coming. By the time that *U-35*'s patrol concluded on 20 August, de la Perière and his crew had sunk no less than fifty-four merchant ships, totalling 91,150 tons – using only the 88mm deck gun and four torpedoes (one of which was a miss). Thirty-one of the victims were Italian ships, whilst eleven were British. The Danish, Norwegian, Greek, French and Spanish merchant fleets each lost two apiece, whilst the remaining two losses were Tunisian and Japanese respectively. A further eight steam ships and a French cruiser were attacked, but not sunk. This stands as the most successful submarine patrol of all time.

Of this patrol, de la Perière once said: 'My record cruise was quite tame and dull. We stopped the vessels. The crews boarded the lifeboats. We inspected the ships' documents, told the crews how they could reach the next port and then sank the stopped prize.' For his achievements, de la Perière, who was once described as 'a modest but very skilled skipper respected by his crew', was awarded the *Pour le Mérite*.

By the end of the war, de la Perière, who remained in command of *U-35* until 1918 and conducted fifteen war patrols in it, had become the most successful U-boat commander of all time, a record which still stands. During his navy career, he sank 194 ships totalling 454,000 tons, always strictly according to prize rules. ●

27 JULY 1916

CAPTAIN FRYATT EXECUTED

IN FEBRUARY 1915 the Germans announced that they would commence unrestricted submarine warfare against any enemy vessels, civilian or otherwise. The seas around the British Isles, including the whole of the English Channel, would be considered a 'war zone'.

In response, the Admiralty issued secret orders to the masters of all merchant ships: 'No British Merchant Ship would ever tamely surrender to a submarine, but should do its utmost to escape. If a submarine comes up suddenly with obvious hostile intentions, steer straight for it at maximum speed, altering course as necessary to keep it ahead. The submarine will probably dive, in which case you have ensured your ship's safety, as the enemy will be compelled to resurface astern of you.'

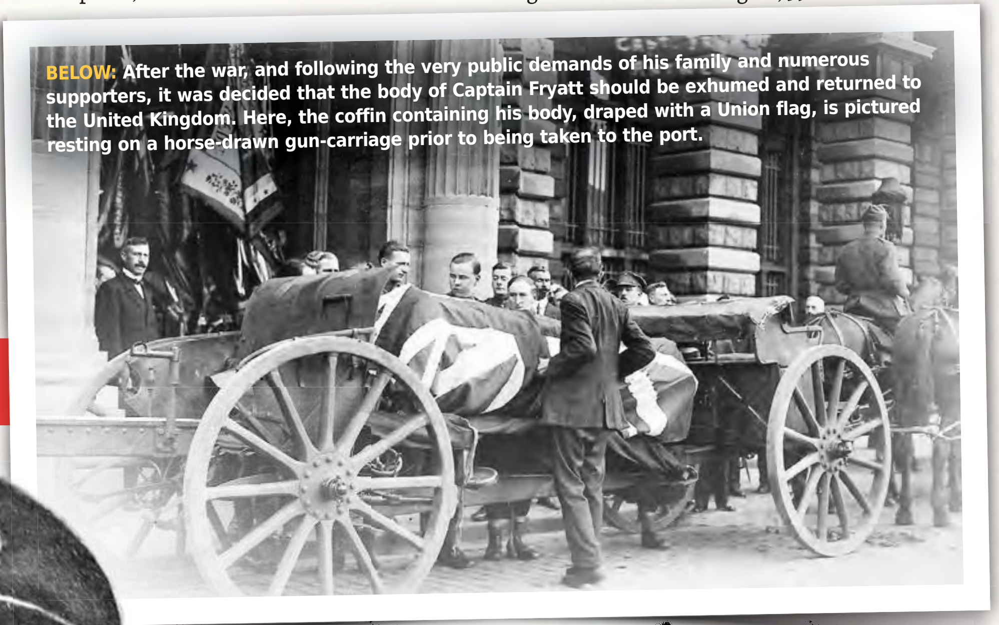
Amongst the most vulnerable of the British vessels operating in the Channel were the ferry boats. Though passenger services had been suspended, ferries still carried cargo and post across the Channel. The Great Eastern Railway (GER), for example, operated services from Harwich to Rotterdam in neutral Holland.

During one such voyage to Holland on 2 March 1915, the GER ferry *Wrexham* encountered a German U-boat in mid-channel. The submarine chased the ferry for no less than forty miles before *Wrexham* reached the safety of Dutch territorial waters.

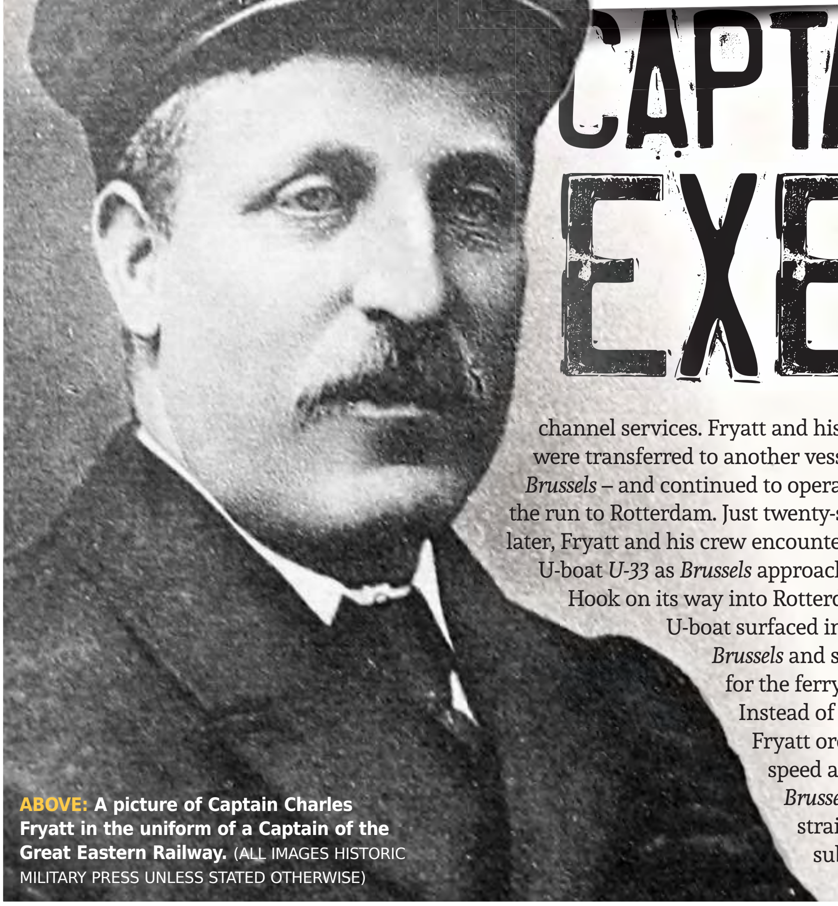
The Board of the GER were, quite rightly, delighted with the *Wrexham*'s escape and its master, Captain Charles Algernon Fryatt, was presented with a gold watch, whilst 'special compliments' were paid to the *Wrexham*'s engine-room team for their efforts.

However, *Wrexham* was only capable of a maximum of twelve knots and, despite her exploits, she was retired from the cross-channel services. Fryatt and his crew were transferred to another vessel – *Brussels* – and continued to operate on the run to Rotterdam. Just twenty-six days later, Fryatt and his crew encountered the U-boat *U-33* as *Brussels* approached the Hook on its way into Rotterdam. The U-boat surfaced in front of *Brussels* and signaled for the ferry to stop. Instead of stopping Fryatt ordered full speed ahead and *Brussels* charged straight at the submarine. Exactly as the Admiralty had expected, the submarine could do little but dive to avoid being rammed. As *Brussels* rushed forward, *U-33* sank beneath the surface, but the men in the stokehold felt a jolt as the ferry clipped the submarine's periscope. *U-33* bobbed back up to the surface. It then dived and was not seen again by the crew of *Brussels*. Fryatt, who had now acquired something of a reputation, received yet another gold watch and his actions were 'commended' by the Admiralty.

The Germans were now determined to capture Fryatt. On the night of 22 June 1916, *Brussels* left the Hook of Holland with 100 Belgian and Russian refugees, 390 tons of cargo and mail. As the ferry put to sea a rocket was fired from the shore. Its purpose or meaning has never been made clear.



BELOW: After the war, and following the very public demands of his family and numerous supporters, it was decided that the body of Captain Fryatt should be exhumed and returned to the United Kingdom. Here, the coffin containing his body, draped with a Union flag, is pictured resting on a horse-drawn gun-carriage prior to being taken to the port.

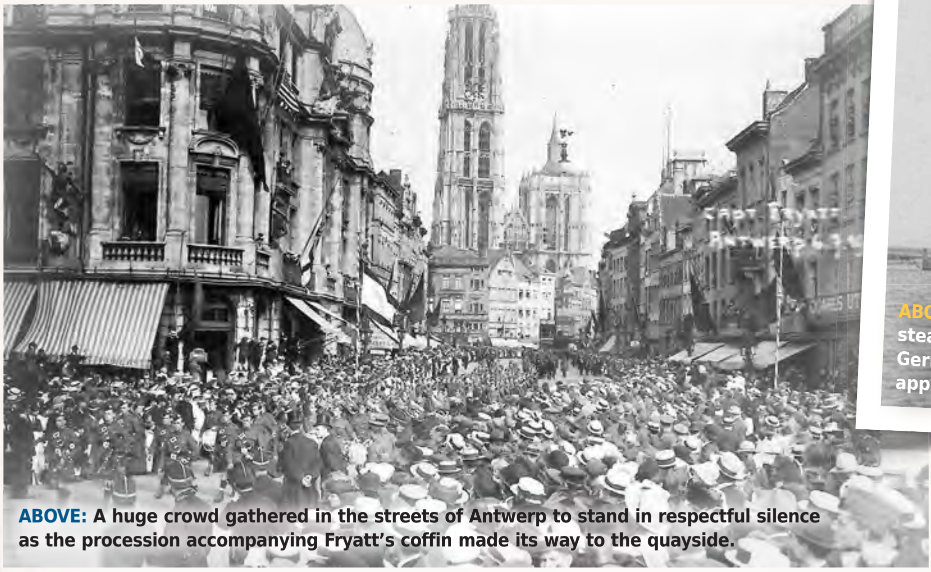


ABOVE: A picture of Captain Charles Fryatt in the uniform of a Captain of the Great Eastern Railway. (ALL IMAGES HISTORIC MILITARY PRESS UNLESS STATED OTHERWISE)

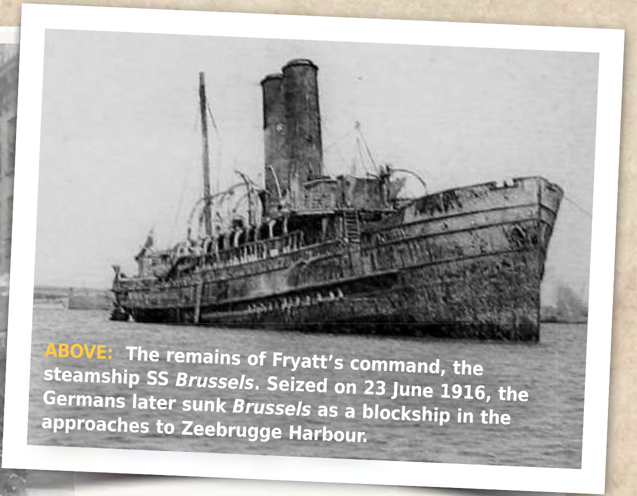
Twelve miles beyond the Maas Buoy, a small boat was seen, which repeatedly flashed the letter 'S' in Morse code. Momentarily Fryatt switched on his navigation lights. It proved to be a fatal mistake. Fifteen minutes later, *Brussels* came to a halt surrounded by nine German patrol boats. There was no escape for Fryatt this time.

The ferry was quickly boarded and the crew taken prisoner. Under the German flag, *Brussels* was taken into Zeebrugge and then up the canal to Bruges.

Though the British Foreign Office was informed on 1 July 1916 that the officers and



ABOVE: A huge crowd gathered in the streets of Antwerp to stand in respectful silence as the procession accompanying Fryatt's coffin made its way to the quayside.



ABOVE: The remains of Fryatt's command, the steamship SS *Brussels*. Seized on 23 June 1916, the Germans later sunk *Brussels* as a blockship in the approaches to Zeebrugge Harbour.

crew of *Brussels* were safe and well, two weeks later a report in the Dutch newspaper *De Telegraaf* stated that Fryatt was to be court-martialled for attempting to ram a submarine. The British Foreign Office immediately made enquiries through the US Ambassador and asked for the trial to be postponed. This was refused by the German officials because, they claimed, 'German submarine witnesses could not be further detained [from their duties]'.

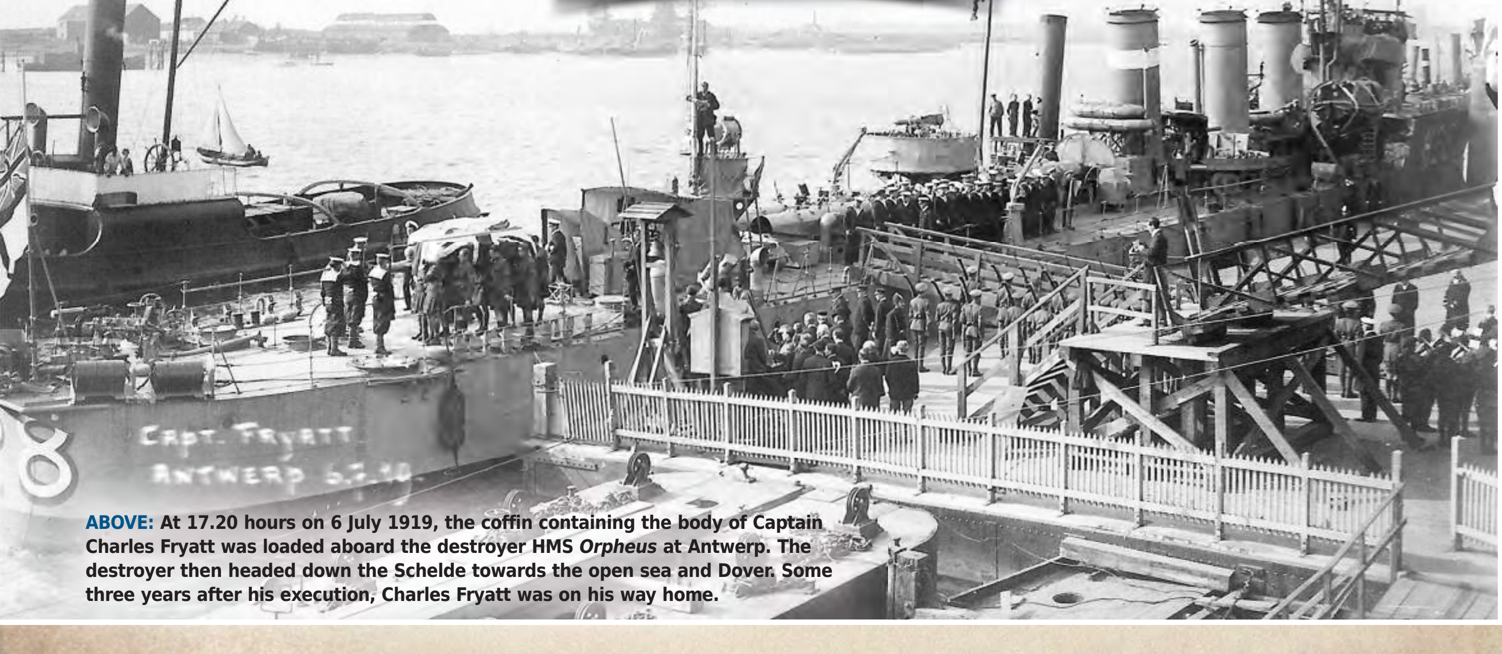
The Foreign Office then wrote to the US Ambassador stating that the British Government considered that Fryatt's actions were 'perfectly legitimate'. He was tried at Bruges Town Hall on 27 July 1916. He was found guilty of being a *franc-tireur*, some of the evidence against him being the inscription on his watch, and sentenced to death. The sentence was quickly confirmed by the Kaiser and at 19.00 hours the same day Fryatt was executed by a firing squad.

A notice announcing the execution was published in Dutch, French and German. Signed by Admiral Ludwig von Schröder, he stated: 'The English captain of a merchant ship, Charles Fryatt, of Southampton, though he did not belong to the armed forces of the enemy, attempted on March 28th, 1915, to destroy a German submarine by running it down. For this he has been condemned to death by judgment this day of the Field Court Martial of the Naval Corps, and has been executed. A ruthless deed has thus been avenged, belatedly but just.'

On 31 July, the Prime Minister broke the news of Fryatt's execution to Parliament: 'I deeply regret to say that it appears to be true that Captain Fryatt has been murdered by the Germans. His Majesty's Government have heard with the utmost indignation of this atrocious crime against the laws of nations and the usages of war. Coming as it does contemporaneously with the lawless cruelty towards the population of Lille and other occupied districts of France, it shows that the German High Command, under the stress of military defeat, have renewed their policy of terrorism. It is impossible of course to conjecture to what atrocities they may proceed.'

There was a national outpouring of support, including financial support, for Fryatt's widow and her children. In the United States, the *New York Times* denounced the execution as 'a deliberate murder', whilst the *New York Herald* described it as 'The crowning German atrocity'. Plaques were inscribed in his memory and a street was renamed in his honour. After the war his body was removed from Belgium to receive a state funeral before being re-buried at his home-town of Dovercourt. ●

LEFT: The news that Captain Fryatt had been executed aroused a storm of indignation throughout the Allied nations. Many proved eager to express their feelings, such as the speaker at a public demonstration in Trafalgar Square soon after the news had broken. Those present were demanding reprisals for his execution. (CRITICAL PAST)



ABOVE: At 17.20 hours on 6 July 1919, the coffin containing the body of Captain Charles Fryatt was loaded aboard the destroyer HMS *Orpheus* at Antwerp. The destroyer then headed down the Schelde towards the open sea and Dover. Some three years after his execution, Charles Fryatt was on his way home.

21 AUGUST 1916

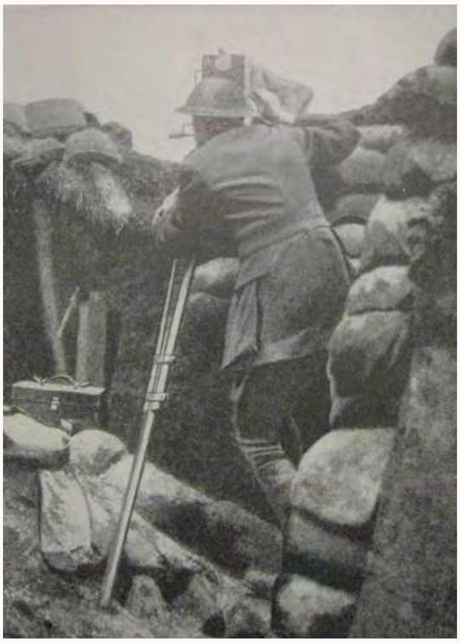
SOMME FILM'S FIRST PUBLIC SHOWING

IN MARCH 1915 the Kinematograph Manufacturers' Association successfully negotiated a plan with the War Office that allowed it to send two official cameramen to join the British Expeditionary Force. One of these two men was Lieutenant Geoffrey H. Malins. As soon as Malins had set foot on French soil he set to work. By June 1916 he had made no less than twenty-six films. But it was dangerous work. By the end of his first year Malins had been wounded twice, gassed, deafened and badly shaken by explosions!

Then, in June 1916, the War Office confirmed that Malins, along with another official cameraman, John McDowell of the British and Colonial Film Company, would be permitted to film and photograph the forthcoming Somme offensive.

An account of the work of Malins and McDowell was given in *The Times* of 5 September 1916: 'The picture ... was taken by two operators, Mr. J.B. McDowell, managing director of the British and Colonial Kinematograph Company, and Mr. G.H. Malins, an operator in the service of the Gaumont Company. These two men perform their duties under the direct supervision of Captain J.C. Faunthorpe, Military Director of Kinematograph Operations on the Western front, and of Dr. E Distin-Maddick, Director of Kinematograph Operations acting on behalf of the War Office, and of the Committee of Kinematograph Companies called the British Topical Committee, who control the output of the films. Captain Faunthorpe was present at Windsor Castle on Saturday night, when the pictures were shown to their Majesties by Dr. Distin-Maddick, and with him had the honour of being presented to Their Majesties at the conclusion of the exhibition.

'Both operators, Mr. McDowell and Mr. Malins, are appointed by the British Topical Committee, and paid by them at the rate of £1 per day, the War Office providing travelling, transport and billets. They wear the usual uniform which war correspondents are authorized to wear, and act under the orders on the field of Captain Faunthorpe, who, like Distin-Maddick, has on many occasions since August, 1915, when the first kinematograph pictures were taken, worked under enemy fire. When the picture was completed, it was suggested to the War Office that the names of the two operators and their portraits should be placed upon the screen, but it was felt that this would be invidious in view of the fact that others, including the two directors, had run equally great risks ... Mr. McDowell left this country to take kinematograph pictures on June 28, and the next day began to "film" the


ABOVE: Lieutenant Geoffrey Malins using a Debrie camera with the characteristic rear-mounted film counter. This image is often captioned as having been taken on 1 July 1916. It is claimed that it shows Malins filming the preliminary British bombardment which marked the opening of the Somme offensive. Shortly afterwards, Malins was half-buried by debris from an exploding shell. (HISTORIC MILITARY PRESS)

BELOW: A still from the film *The Battle of the Somme.* Whilst this image is part of a sequence purportedly showing British soldiers moving forward on 1 July 1916, it is now generally considered to have been staged for the camera, possibly at a Trench Mortar School well behind the lines, and filmed by Malins or McDowell prior to the start of the battle. (COURTESY OF PEN & SWORD BOOKS; COLOURED BY JON WILKINSON)

ABOVE: At about 06.30 hours on 1 July 1916, Malins filmed these men of the 1st Battalion Lancashire Fusiliers waiting to go 'over the top' in the sunken lane in front of Beaumont Hamel. He captured about a minute of film at this location. (CRITICAL PAST)

ABOVE: This well-known image of a wounded British soldier was shot by either Malins or McDowell on 1 July 1916. (HISTORIC MILITARY PRESS)

artillery preparations for the great offensive. On July 1 he filmed the leap from the trenches and other stirring pictures, often from such exposed positions that he had to be called away. While he was taking several of the pictures shrapnel burst overhead, and bullets struck the ground in front of the camera. Both operators used an ordinary lens.'

Malins himself recalled the opening of the British offensive, having got himself into position to film the events that followed: 'I glanced down our trenches. The officers were giving final instructions. Every man was in his place. The first to go over would be the engineers to wire the crater. They were all ready, crouching down, with their implements in their hands.' Malins glanced at his watch. It was now 07.15 hours.

'Heavens, how the minutes dragged! It seemed like a lifetime waiting there. My nerves were strung up to a high pitch; my heart was thumping like a steam-hammer. I gave a quick glance at an officer close by. He was mopping the perspiration from his brow, and clutching his stick, first in one hand, then in the other – quite unconsciously, I am sure.' As Malins watched, this officer looked down at his watch. The time now was 07.19 hours.

Seconds later Malins started to turn the handle of his camera, slowly but steadily, at a rate of two revolutions per second. No more, no less. His intention by starting to film before zero was to ensure that he captured the moment that the mine laid by the British under Hawthorn Ridge Redoubt broke the surface. Constructed over the previous seven months by the men of 252 Tunnelling Company, Royal Engineers, the mine was intended to destroy the German strongpoint above.

Still the seconds ticked by. Malins looked at his exposure dial. He had already used up over a thousand feet of film. A fleeting feeling of fear swept over him. Would the film run out before the mine exploded? What if he had got his timings wrong? Would it go up before he had time to reload? Beads of perspiration began to form on his forehead. Nervously he continued to turn the camera's handle.

ABOVE: A still from the footage shot by Malins that was used in the film *The Battle of the Somme*. The image is part of a sequence introduced by a caption reading "British Tommies rescuing a comrade under shell fire". In spite of considerable research, the identity of the rescuer remains unconfirmed. The casualty, who died some thirty minutes after reaching the British line, appears to be wearing the shoulder flash of 29th Division. He is the same person pictured by Ernest Brooks being carried over the New Beaumont Road. (CRITICAL PAST)

ABOVE: The Hawthorn crater today. Now overgrown, it can be seen in the centre. The British front line is to the right of this shot; the German trenches over to the left. (WITH THE KIND PERMISSION OF NICK COLEMAN)

His hand began to shake and another 250 feet length of film was exposed. He had no option but to continue.

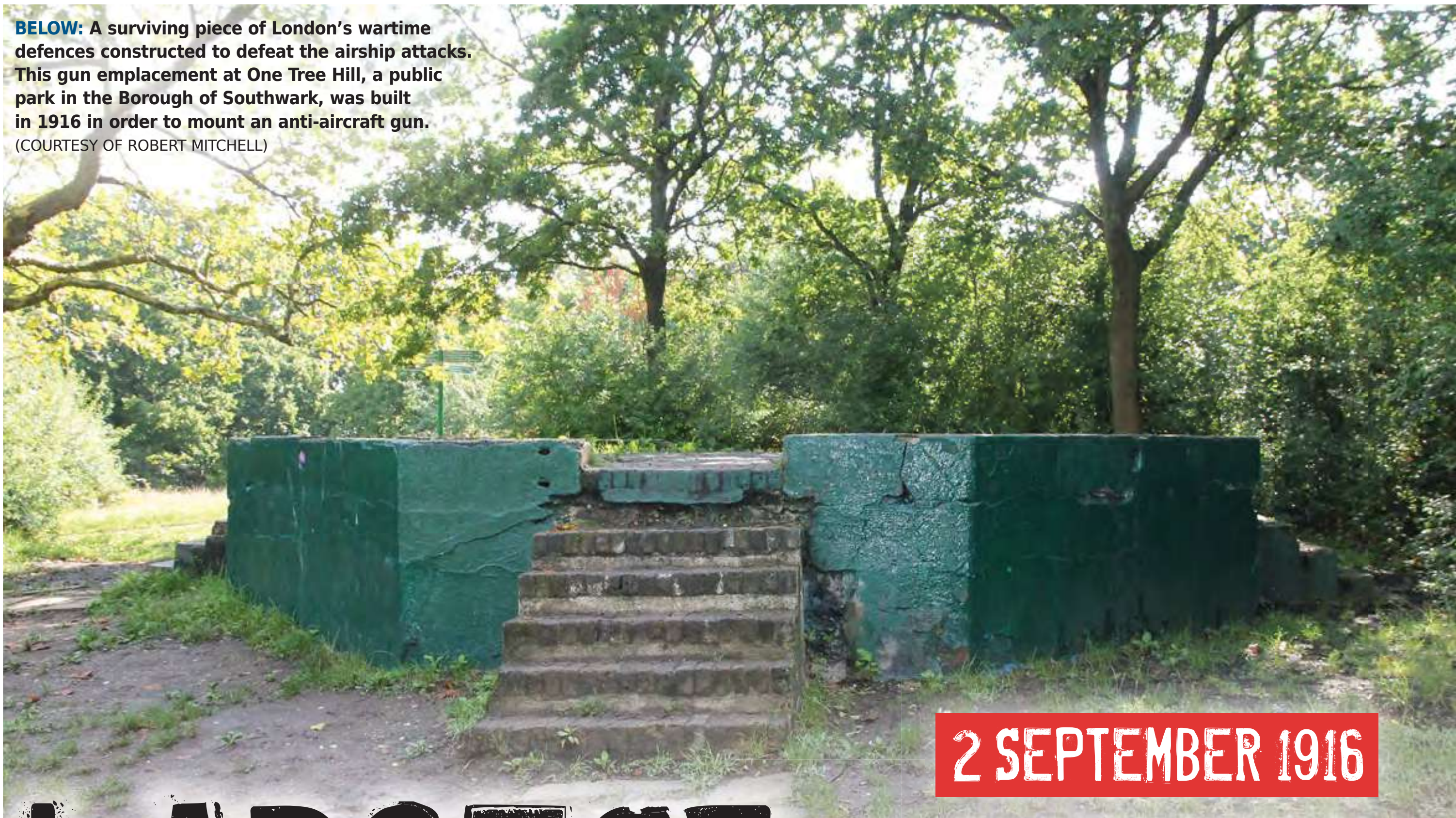
Then it happened. At 07.20 hours on the morning of 1 July 1916, the 40,000lbs of ammonal explosive (approximately eighteen metric tons) that constituted the mine laid under Hawthorn Ridge Redoubt exploded. 'The ground where I stood gave a mighty convulsion. It rocked and swayed. I gripped hold of my tripod to steady myself. Then, for all the world like a gigantic sponge, the earth rose in the air to the height of thousands of feet. Higher and higher it rose, and with a horrible, grinding roar, the earth fell back upon itself, leaving in its place a mountain of smoke.'

Almost in an instant, Malins became 'cold, cool and calculating'. All that mattered now was dealing with events from a pictorial perspective.

It was on 10 July 1916, that Malins and McDowell returned to London with 8,000 feet of film. After editing, the first showing of the film, to David Lloyd George, took place on 2 August 1916 – just one month and a day after the opening of the Somme offensive. It finally opened to the public in London on 21 August.

By 5 September, it was noted in *The Times*, 'the demand on the part of the public to see the battle film of the Somme is greater than ever'. The same report went on to add: 'It has now been booked to more than 1,000 picture theatres throughout the kingdom. At the Scala Theatre and at the Philharmonic Hall there are queues of people all day long booking seats.

'Wherever the picture has been shown all records for the attendance of the public have been broken.' ●



BELOW: **A surviving piece of London's wartime defences constructed to defeat the airship attacks. This gun emplacement at One Tree Hill, a public park in the Borough of Southwark, was built in 1916 in order to mount an anti-aircraft gun.** (COURTESY OF ROBERT MITCHELL)

2 SEPTEMBER 1916

LARGEST ZEPPELIN RAID OF THE WAR

ABOVE: **The last resting place of the crew of *SL.11* at Cannock Chase.** (HISTORIC MILITARY PRESS)

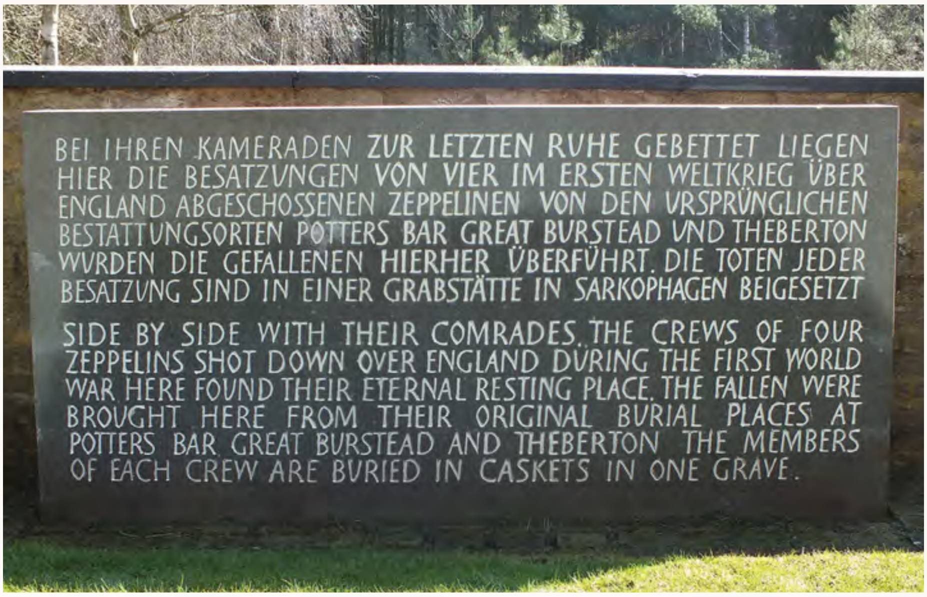
DESPITE THE fact that anti-aircraft batteries and searchlight units had been introduced, and were becoming increasingly effective, by the beginning of September 1916 the German airships still continued to dominate the skies over the UK. The comparative ease with which *L.31*, under the command of *Kapitänleutnant* Mathy, had attacked London on the night of 24/25 August only served to further strengthen the German command's confidence. Against this backdrop they decided to carry out their 'biggest demonstration' of the war against the British capital.

The continually improving British defences also saw the introduction of night fighter squadrons in 1916. Equipped with Royal Aircraft Factory B.E.2c aircraft armed with synchronized Lewis machine-guns, No.37 (Home Defence) Squadron was based at Goldhanger, Rochford and Stow Maries airfields, whilst No.39 (Home Defence) Squadron operated out of fields at Hainault, North Weald Bassett and Sutton's Farm, Hornchurch. As events during the night of 2/3 September would reveal, these aircraft and their pilots would very quickly make their presence felt.

For this attack, every available naval airship was deployed, and in addition a number of the army's airships were also allocated. In all, sixteen airships set out on the afternoon of the 2nd – twelve naval and four military – and all but two, one naval and one military, crossed the British coast.

The naval ships were *L.11*, *L.13*, *L.14*, *L.16*, *L.17*, *L.21*, *L.22*, *L.23*, *L.24*, *L.30*, *L.32* and *SL.8*; *L.17*, however, turned back off the coast of Norfolk. The four military airships were *LZ.90*, *LZ.97*, *LZ.98* and *SL.11*. Of these four, one turned back at the Long Sand lightship whilst *SL.11*, as we shall see in the following pages, reached London (being the only one of the raiders to come within seven miles of Charing Cross) but never returned, being the first night-flying victory for the RFC's Home Defence squadrons.

The attackers' departure from their bases was known at the Admiralty at about 17.00 hours. The nation's defences were warned – particularly those units on the East Coast. Of the great load of bombs carried by the airships, 261 high-explosives and 202 incendiaries fell


BEI IHREN KAMERADEN ZUR LETZTEN RUHE GEBETTET LIEGEN HIER DIE BESATZUNGEN VON VIER IM ERSTEN WELTKRIEG ÜBER ENGLAND ABGESCHOSSENEN ZEPPELINEN VON DEN URSPRÜNGLICHEN BESTATTUNGSORTEN POTTERS BAR GREAT BURSTEAD UND THEBERTON WURDEN DIE GEFALLENEN HIERHER ÜBERFÜHRT. DIE TOTEN JEDER BESATZUNG SIND IN EINER GRABSTÄTTE IN SARKOPHAGEN BEIGESETZT
SIDE BY SIDE WITH THEIR COMRADES, THE CREWS OF FOUR ZEPPELINS SHOT DOWN OVER ENGLAND DURING THE FIRST WORLD WAR HERE FOUND THEIR ETERNAL RESTING PLACE. THE FALLEN WERE BROUGHT HERE FROM THEIR ORIGINAL BURIAL PLACES AT POTTERS BAR GREAT BURSTEAD AND THEBERTON THE MEMBERS OF EACH CREW ARE BURIED IN CASKETS IN ONE GRAVE.

ABOVE: On 16 October 1959, an agreement was concluded by the governments of the United Kingdom and the Federal Republic of Germany concerning the future care of the graves of German nationals who lost their lives in the United Kingdom during the two world wars. The agreement provided for the transfer of those graves which were not situated in cemeteries and plots of Commonwealth war graves maintained in situ by the CWGC to a central cemetery at Cannock Chase in Staffordshire. Within the cemetery at Cannock Chase is this memorial to the four airship crews who were shot down over the UK during the First World War, including that of *SL.11*. (HISTORIC MILITARY PRESS)

on British soil, but not one of them on the City of London. Whilst the ineffectiveness of the raid was due in part to unfavourable weather conditions, of greater impact was the demoralising effect produced by the shooting down of one of the attackers, *SL.11*.

The historian Joseph Morris made the following observations on the operation in the 1920s: 'The *L.16* had made a bold attempt to reach the capital from the same direction as that of the *SL.11*, but when at St. Albans she witnessed the hurricane of shell with which the Schutte Lanz [airship] was being assailed, lost heart, wavered and turned, hurriedly dropped her bombs at Essendon, and fled as far from London as possible before even the aeroplanes had come into action. Her commander must have seen an intense illumination suddenly appear. He flew away and to safety at about sixty miles an hour.

'The *L.32* was at Tring when the *SL.11* flamed up. Her commander then turned abruptly off to the east. He went slowly for a while, probably considering the situation and apparently determined to make for home after having dropped such bombs as he had left as near London as he dare approach. They dropped at Hertford and Ware. He then made off [at] full speed for Lowestoft and so out to sea and sanctuary ...

'*L.21* was at Flitwick and passed east to Hitchin, where her commander saw the glare of the burning *SL.11*. So he, too, at once turned homewards at high speed, shedding his bombs by the way as he went. *L.14* at the time of the catastrophe was at Thaxted. Like the others, her commander swung his ship sharply round for home, dropped his bombs willy-nilly ... The naval Schutte Lanz – the *SL.8* – had reached St. Ives when her commander apparently saw the glare in the sky fifty miles away. Instinctively knowing what this signified he tore back at high speed to the coast, dropping his bombs here and there. *L.30* did not penetrate to any extent. She flew inland a bit near Lowestoft and was well away before the raid had really started. *L.24* made a timid incursion near Cromer, dropped bombs to no purpose, and left the troubled atmosphere at Bacton. The *L.11* coasted between Great Yarmouth and Harwich and dropped bombs at both places, but only two fell on land and those at Yarmouth. No more was heard of her that night. The *L.23* raced about the Wash at high speed between eleven and twelve o'clock and dropped bombs in a most arbitrary fashion.'

All of the other airships involved in the mission experienced similarly insignificant results. By the time that the last of the attackers had headed back out over the North Sea, the casualties resulting from the airships' deadly cargo of about sixteen tons were four killed and twelve injured, while the material damage was negligible.

ABOVE: An ammunition store still extant at Stow Maries. A partially sunken structure, protected by an earth bank, aligned east-west and divided into three rooms, it is located near to the flying field on the east side of the track. (COURTESY OF TERRY JOYCE; WWW.GEOGRAPH.ORG.UK)

ABOVE: Described as 'the largest known surviving group of RFC buildings on a WWI aerodrome', the historic First World War airfield at Stow Maries in Essex, and twenty-four associated buildings, have Grade II* listed status. The airfield was established in September 1916 on twelve fields belonging to Edwins Hall and Old Whitmans farms. Located on a level plateau to the north of the river Crouch, the aerodrome comprised a "main street" aligned north-south, with buildings on either side; the parade ground and reception building lay to the west, and the flying field and hangars to the east. (COURTESY OF LEE HOLMES; WWW.GEOGRAPH.ORG.UK)

'No event in the history of the air attacks by German airships on Great Britain had such a complete and overwhelming effect on the German airship service as the shooting down in flames of the wooden [*SL.11*],' concluded Joseph Morris. 'The moral effect on the population was immense. The catastrophe was witnessed by millions, and the awful conflagration was visible for over fifty miles.'

When it is considered that this was the greatest effort of its kind ever mounted by the Germans, and that the bombs were, in number and weight, the maximum ever dropped in one raid, and that the casualties and damage were insignificant, then the efforts of the British defenders that night marked one of the most significant turning points of the battle against the enemy's airships. As the Official History notes, that night 'the heart went out of them, as well it might, and their bombs seemed to us to be dropped indiscriminately, not to destroy, but to lighten the ships and so hove them great height and performance' in order to escape. ●

BELOW: The first of a series of images, all dated 3 September 1916 and stamped 'sanctioned by Official Press Bureau', which purport to show the fate of *SL.11.* Here the airship is being picked out by searchlights.

3 SEPTEMBER 1916

FIRST AIRSHIP BROUGHT DOWN ON BRITISH SOIL

ONE OF the many Royal Flying Corps pilots who took off to intercept the large German attack on the night of 2/3 September 1916 was Lieutenant William Leefe Robinson. It was shortly after 23.00 hours on the 2nd that Leefe Robinson took off in his No.39 (Home Defence) Squadron Royal Aircraft Factory B.E.2c from the airfield at Suttons Farm. His orders were to patrol a course between Suttons Farm and Joyce Green.

Leefe Robinson subsequently described the events that followed: 'I climbed to 10,000 feet in 53 minutes. I counted what I thought were ten sets of flares – there were a few clouds below me but on the whole it was a beautifully clear night.

'I saw nothing till 1.10 am. when two searchlights picked up a Zeppelin about SE. of Woolwich. The clouds had collected in this quarter, and the searchlights had some difficulty in keeping on the aircraft. By this time I had managed to climb to 12,900 feet, and I made in the direction of the Zeppelin which was being fired on by a few anti-aircraft guns – hoping to cut it off on its way eastward. I very slowly gained on it for about ten minutes – I judged it to be about 800 feet below me, and I sacrificed my speed in order to keep the height. It went behind some clouds, avoided the searchlights, and I lost sight of it.

'After 15 minutes' fruitless search I returned to my patrol. I managed to pick up and distinguish my flares again. At about 1.50 a.m. I noticed a red glow in NE. London. Taking it to be an outbreak of fire I went in that direction. At 2.5 a.m. a Zeppelin was picked up by the searchlights over NNE. London (as far as I could judge). Remembering my last failure I sacrificed height (I was still 12,900 feet) or speed and made nose down in the direction of the Zeppelin. I saw shells bursting and night tracer shells flying around it. When I drew closer I noticed that the anti-aircraft aim 'was too high or too low; also a good many some 800 feet behind – a few tracers went right over. I could hear the bursts when about 3,000 feet from the Zeppelin.

RIGHT: Lieutenant William Leefe Robinson. When Robinson was awarded the Victoria Cross by the King at Windsor Castle, huge crowds of admirers and onlookers were in attendance. Robinson was also awarded £3,500 in prize money and a silver cup donated by the people of Hornchurch. (ALL IMAGES HISTORIC MILITARY PRESS UNLESS STATED OTHERWISE)

'I flew about 800 feet below it from bow to stern and distributed one drum along it (alternate New Brock and Pomeroy). It seemed to have no effect; I therefore moved to one side and gave it another drum distributed along its side – without apparent effect. I then got behind it (by this time I was very close – 500 feet or less below) and concentrated one drum on one part (underneath rear). I was then at a height of 11,500 feet when attacking [the] Zeppelin.

'I hardly finished the drum before I saw the part fired at glow. In a few seconds the whole rear part was blazing. When the third drum was fired there were no searchlights on the Zeppelin and no anti-aircraft was firing. I quickly got out of the way of the falling blazing Zeppelin and being very excited fired off a few red Very's [*sic*] lights and dropped a parachute flare.

LIEUT. W. L. ROBINSON, V.C.
FOR VALOUR

ABOVE: **An example of the many commemorative postcards produced after Lieutenant William Leefe Robinson was awarded the Victoria Cross.**

'Having very little oil and petrol left, I returned to Suttons Farm, landing at 1.45 am. On landing I found I had shot away the machine-gun wire guard, the rear part of the centre section, and had pierced the rear main spar several times.'

The airship in question was the Schütte-Lanz airship *SL.11*. Based at Spich, south of Cologne, it was commanded by *Hauptmann* Wilhelm Schramm. It had already bombed St Albans when it was attacked over Hertfordshire by Leefe Robinson.

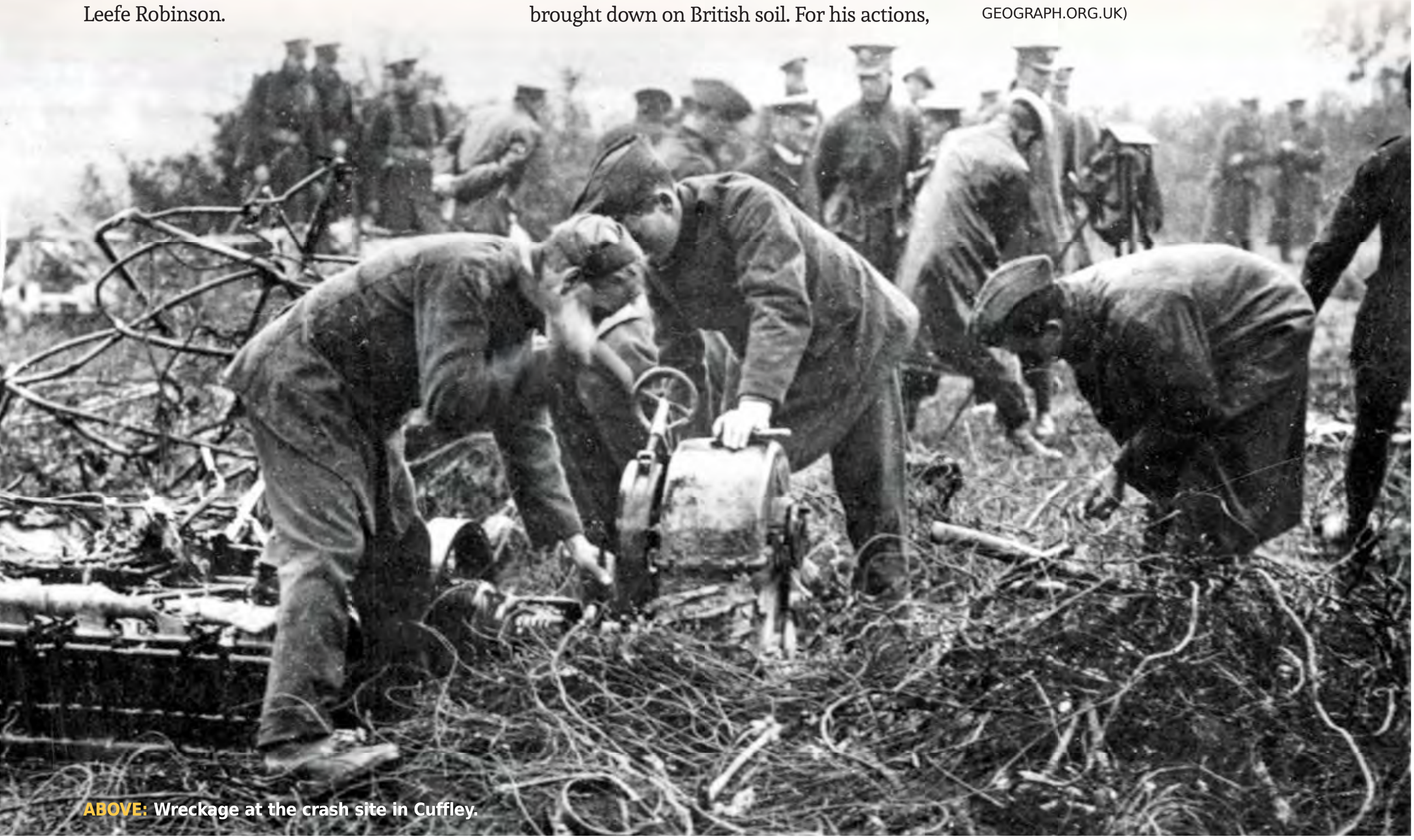
SL.11 fell to the ground in a field behind the Plough Inn in the village of Cuffley. Being of wooden construction, she burned for nearly two hours on the ground. Schramm and his 15-man crew were all killed. One of the many who witnessed the last moments of *SL.11* was Cuffley resident Mr Grow, who lived barely 300 yards from the crash site:

'I was awakened somewhere about 2 o'clock by a tremendous noise of guns banging. Jumping out of bed, I looked out of the window in the front of the house, which faces the field where the Zeppelin fell ... The flaming mass was so near me that I thought it was going to drop on an old hostelry only a few score yards away, but it glided on and fell with a fearful crash on to a field about 150 to 200 yards from that house.

'I watched the whole spectacle, enthralled with the magnificent sight. Immediately the flaming mass crashed to the earth I ran across the field ... The heat was tremendous, and for an hour and a half the fire raged so fiercely that we were unable to get near the wreckage. I should have mentioned that when the airship caught fire she seemed to me to be about a couple of miles away. For a few minutes or so, it seemed, she floated horizontally, and then she suddenly tipped on end and fell and drifted to where she landed. She struck the ground nose down, and this no doubt accounted for the comparatively small space the huge structure seemed to occupy when on the field. We were afraid to get too near the blazing mass because of the almost continuous popping off of the machine-gun cartridges as the flames reached them.'

SL.11 was the first German airship to be brought down on British soil. For his actions, Leefe Robinson was promoted to Captain and awarded the Victoria Cross 'for most conspicuous bravery'. The announcement was made in *The London Gazette* just two days later. The citation stated: 'He attacked an enemy airship under circumstances of great difficulty and danger, and sent it crashing to the ground as a flaming wreck. He had been in the air for more than two hours, and had previously attacked another airship during his flight.' Leefe Robinson was the first person to be awarded the Victoria Cross for an action in, or over, the UK. ●

ABOVE: **This memorial to Leefe Robinson's action at Cuffley was paid for by funds donated by readers of the *Daily Express*. An inscription states: 'To the Memory of Captain William Leefe Robinson VC, Worcs. Regt. and RFC, who on September 3 1916 above this spot brought down SL.11, the first German airship destroyed on British soil.'** (COURTESY OF BIKEBOY; WWW.GEOGRAPH.ORG.UK)



ABOVE: **Wreckage at the crash site in Cuffley.**

THE CAPTURE OF GINCHY

9 SEPTEMBER 1916

ON A rise overlooking the small town of Combles is a junction of six roads at a tiny village called Ginchy which, despite the efforts and sacrifice of the men of the British Expeditionary Force battling in and around the valley of the River Somme, was still in German hands in September 1916. A mass of shattered masonry and shell-holes by the late summer of 1916, Ginchy had been a key objective for 7th Division in the important attack of 3 September, though it would not be taken for another six days.

The village was of some tactical importance as its capture would give the Allies a commanding view of the German third line of defences, and deny such advantages to the Germans who had been able overlook the British positions. Part of the ongoing Somme offensive, it was to be attacked on 9 September by two divisions of the British Fourth Army, with strong support from an adjacent French division. Unlike other assaults, on this occasion a short bombardment in the morning would be followed by an attack in the afternoon. The thinking behind this was that in the past, assaults in the morning had given the Germans the whole of the rest of the day to organize and carry out counter-attacks.

ABOVE: **A wounded soldier is helped back towards the rear on 9 September 1916.** (DUTCH NATIONAL ARCHIVES)

By attacking in the afternoon the enemy would have little or no time to counter the Allied assault before nightfall. Under the cover of darkness the British and French troops could then consolidate the ground they had won with a far better chance of holding it when the inevitable German attacks were delivered the following day.

'At 4.45 p.m. on the 9th September the attack was reopened on the whole of the Fourth Army front,' wrote Haig. 'At Ginchy and to the north of Leuze Wood it met with almost immediate success. On the right the enemy's line was seized over a front of more than 1,000 yards from the southwest corner of Bouleaux Wood in a north-westerly direction to a point just south of the Guillemont-Morval tramway. Our troops again forced their way into Ginchy, and passing beyond it carried the line of enemy trenches to the east ... Over 500 prisoners were taken in the operations of the 9th September and following days, making the total since the 1st July over 17,000.'

The attack proved to be one of the very few completely successful Allied operations throughout the course of the Battle of the Somme. The headlines in *The Times* three days later were triumphant: 'The Capture of Ginchy. Dashing Attack by the Irish. Kaiser's Picked Troops Beaten. The whole of the village is ours; or the space of rubble and dust that was the village.'

ABOVE: **A German soldier during the Battle of Ginchy.** (BUNDESARCHIV; BILD-183-R05148)

BELOW: **British troops advancing during the Battle of Ginchy, 9 September 1916.** (COURTESY OF THE AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL; H12254)

BELOW: British Army stretcher bearers attached to a Guards battalion moving forward to bring back soldiers wounded near Ginchy. (COURTESY OF THE AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL; 08451)

ABOVE: Stretcher bearers struggling across the Ginchy battlefield, under fire, on 9 September 1916. (DUTCH NATIONAL ARCHIVES)

The Irish referred to were the men of the 16th (Irish) Division which captured the northern flank of Ginchy, though at considerable cost, suffering the loss of over 4,000 officers and men between 1 and 10 September. The 'picked' German troops were the men of Bavarian Infantry Regiment 19 of the 5th Bavarian Division.

The Times' correspondent, writing on 10 September, gave the following account: 'The advance on Ginchy was made shortly before 5 o'clock. The village was very strongly held, with trenches, dug-outs, machine-guns, and rifle fire. Certain trenches and machine-gun positions about the ruins in a farm near the centre of the village seem to have been the obstacles which caused most trouble; but the Irishmen took everything that stood in their way with the same irresistible dash.

'The first rush carried them into the village, where they had to wait for a while for our guns, which still played on the further side of the place, to lift. Before 5.30 a second rush carried them on through the ruins out to the open beyond. As on many occasions recently, our machine-guns did very good work, both in protecting the attack and subsequently in checking the enemy from counter-attacking. In the village itself there was desperate fighting, not only with rifles and at closer quarters with bombs, but also hand to hand in bayonet encounters ...

'The total advance at this point is reckoned to be about 1100 yards on a front of 1,500; and by this morning the Irishmen had made good their hold on the ground ... and had dug themselves in along the north side of the village, on the left of their advance. A counter-attack this morning on that front was beaten off successfully and, as always, the enemy lost heavily in the venture.'

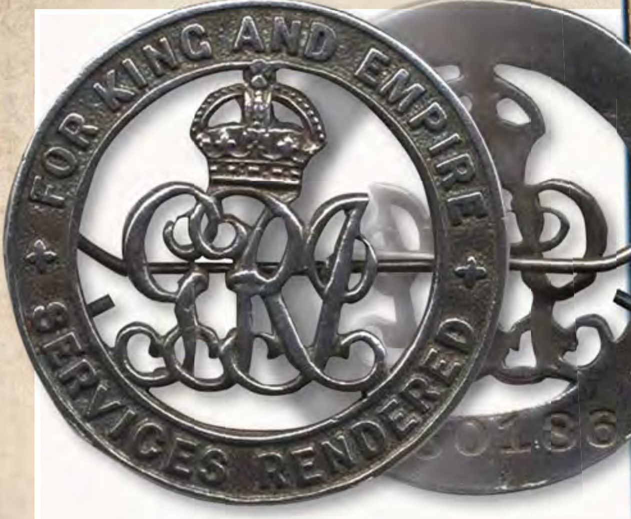
One of the many who lost their lives in the fighting for Ginchy was 36-year-old Lieutenant Thomas Kettle. Serving with the 9th Battalion, Royal Dublin Fusiliers, Kettle was a poet, journalist, essayist and idealist. Despite also being a leading Irish Nationalist, he joined the Dublin Fusiliers when Belgium was attacked, to fight 'not for England, but for small nations'. Described on the Commonwealth War Graves Commission website as 'one of the outstanding Irishmen of his generation', he was killed leading his men in to battle.

Second Lieutenant Emmett Dalton recalled Kettle's death: 'At 5 p.m. on the 9th we attacked Ginchy. I was just behind Tom when we went over the top. He was in a bent position and a bullet got over a steel waistcoat that he wore and entered his heart. Well, he only lasted about one minute.'

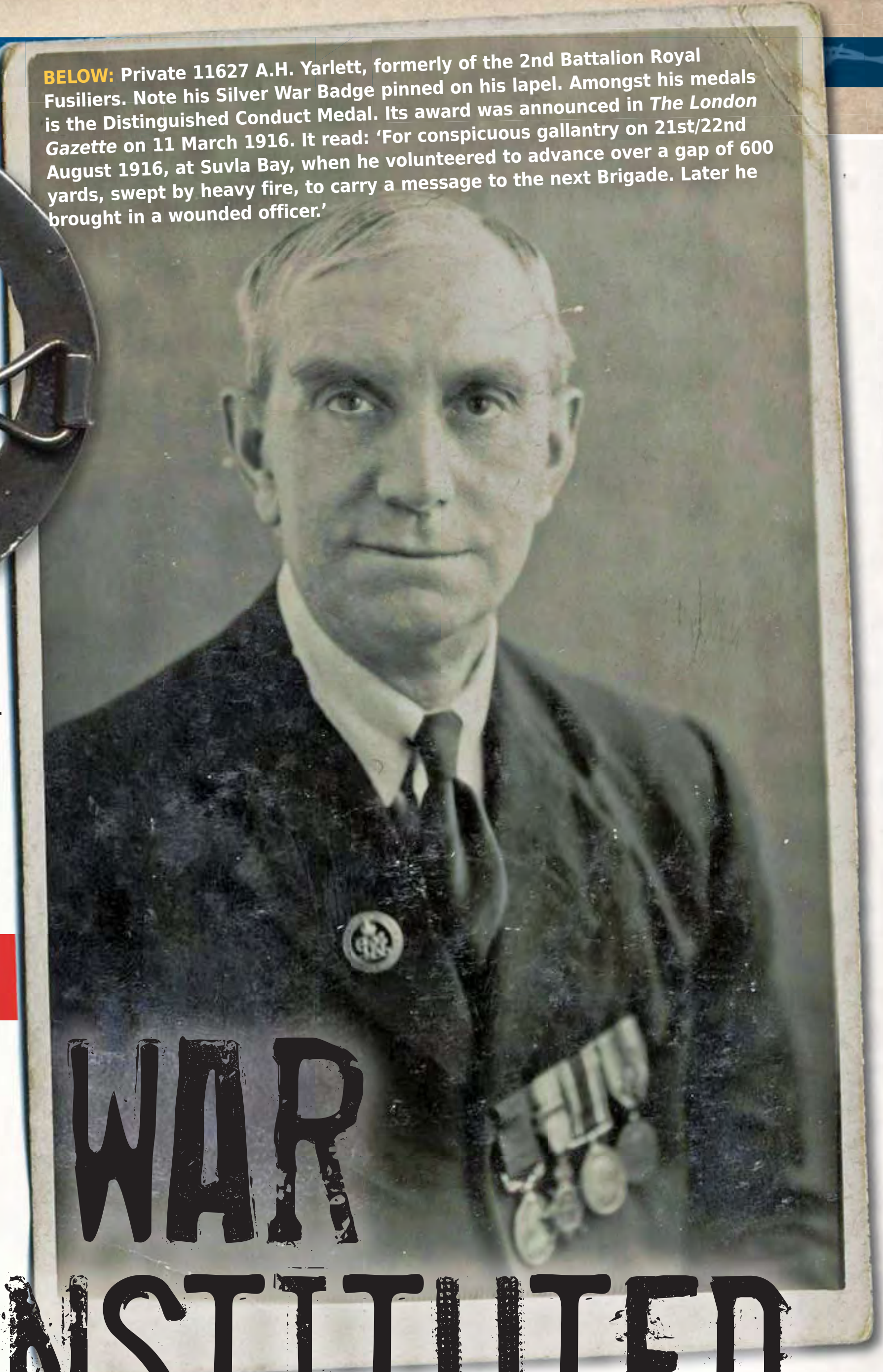
The Battle not only gained the Allies the high ground they sought, but the advance by the Irish and the 56th (London) Division also drove the Germans back so far that Delville Wood, which had been the target of intense German artillery fire, was no longer threatened.

Though small in scale compared to many of the battles during the fighting on the Somme, the degree of success achieved in just a single day had a demoralizing effect upon the Germans. Possibly even more serious for the Germans was that the high casualties they were suffering from the almost constant attacks along the Somme front could not be sustained. General Max Karl Wilhelm von Gallwitz, in command of the German 1st and 2nd Armies – the *Heeresgruppe* Gallwitz – wrote on 11 September that the British heavy artillery was rapidly destroying the German guns and that if the British continued their relentless attack as they were, Germany would simply run out of men and guns. ●

ABOVE: The grave of a British soldier pictured on the battlefield near Ginchy. (NARA)



ABOVE: **A Silver War Badge. This example is stamped with the number 260186, which tells us that it was issued between September 1916 and March 1918. This first batch of around 335,000 badges was issued with just a number and was better quality than most stampings. A check of surviving records tells us that the badge was issued to Private Edward Alfred Johnson, Army Service Corps. Johnson, who had enlisted on 16 November 1915, was discharged on 16 October 1917 at the age of 45. The 'cause of discharge', stated on the records as 'Para 2(d)', indicates those 'who have served as soldiers and being now over military age, have been discharged otherwise than for misconduct'.** (BOTH IMAGES HISTORIC MILITARY PRESS)



BELOW: **Private 11627 A.H. Yarlett, formerly of the 2nd Battalion Royal Fusiliers. Note his Silver War Badge pinned on his lapel. Amongst his medals is the Distinguished Conduct Medal. Its award was announced in *The London Gazette* on 11 March 1916. It read: 'For conspicuous gallantry on 21st/22nd August 1916, at Suvla Bay, when he volunteered to advance over a gap of 600 yards, swept by heavy fire, to carry a message to the next Brigade. Later he brought in a wounded officer.'**

12 SEPTEMBER 1916

SILVER WAR BADGE INSTITUTED

BY 1916, the practice of some women to present white feathers to apparently able-bodied young men who were not wearing the King's uniform forced the authorities to take action. On 12 September 1916, Army Order 316 led to the introduction of the Silver War Badge, also variously known as the Discharge Badge, Wound Badge or Services Rendered Badge – or, incorrectly, the Silver Wound Badge.

Along with an official certificate of entitlement, the badge was awarded to all of those military personnel who had served at home or overseas during the war, and who had been discharged from the armed forces under King's Regulations. Intended to be worn on civilian clothes, the sterling silver badge was circular in shape and carried the legend 'For King and Empire – Services Rendered' around the royal cypher of GRI. The reverse of the badge is plain, except for an identifying number which, unique to each example, was stamped on it.

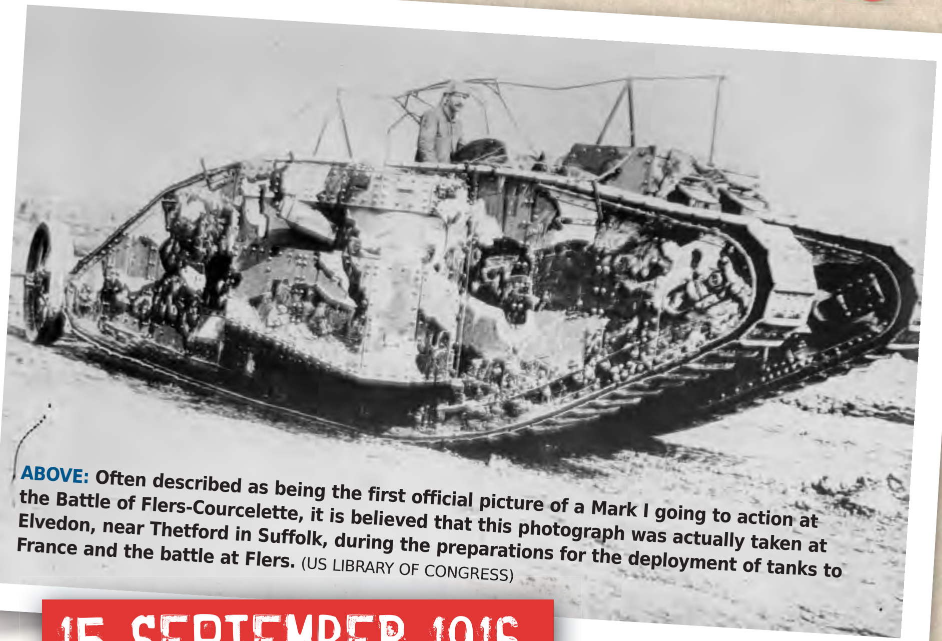
Approximately 1,150,000 badges were eventually issued, each of which had to be claimed and then approved. There were twenty-nine different reasons why someone could have been discharged under the King's Regulations, and this information is also generally stated on the serviceman or woman's record. Army Order 316 of 1916 includes the following statement:

'His Majesty the King has approved the issue of a silver war badge to officers and men of the British, Indian, and Overseas Forces, who have served at home or abroad since the 4 August, 1914, and who on account of age or physical infirmity arising from wounds or sickness caused by military service, in the case of officers, retired or relinquished their commissions, or, in the case of men, been discharged from the Army.' Similar instructions were issued by the Admiralty.

Among those who received the badge, in his case alongside the Victoria Cross, was Sapper Adam Archibald of 218 Field Company RE. Archibald was gassed while constructing a floating bridge across a canal on the Western Front. For his bravery in completing the task, the Scot was awarded the VC, but he was so badly poisoned that he could not return to service. His badge is numbered B186315.

The Academy award-winning actor Ronald Coleman, most famous for his role in *A Double Life*, joined the London Scottish Regiment in 1909 and was among the first men in the trenches after the start of the war. In October 1914 he was seriously wounded in the ankle by shrapnel, which gave him the limp that he would attempt to hide for the rest of his life and acting career. He was discharged in 1916 and received Silver War Badge No.196092 on 4 June 1917. ●

FIRST USE OF TANKS



ABOVE: **Often described as being the first official picture of a Mark I going to action at the Battle of Flers-Courcelette, it is believed that this photograph was actually taken at Elvedon, near Thetford in Suffolk, during the preparations for the deployment of tanks to France and the battle at Flers.** (US LIBRARY OF CONGRESS)

15 SEPTEMBER 1916

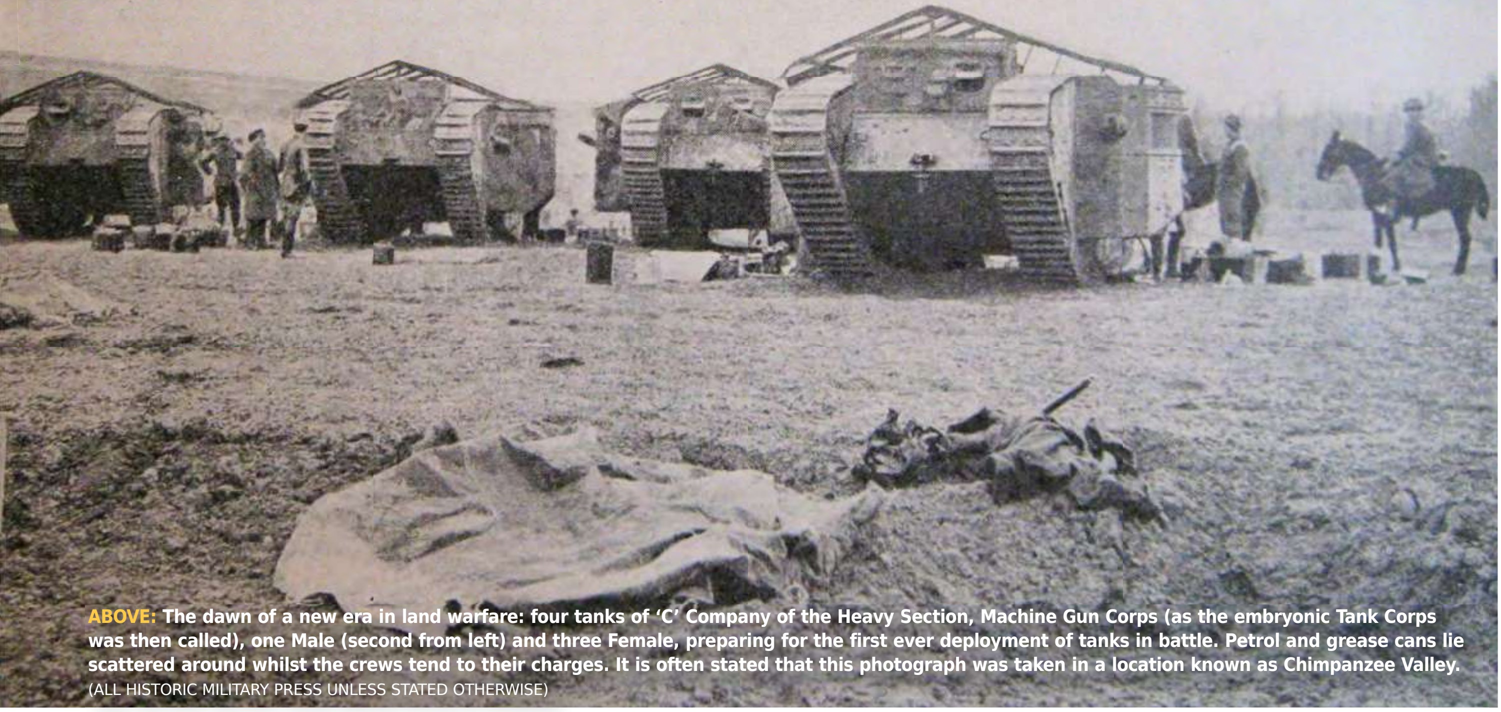
FIELD MARSHAL Haig had waited months for this moment to come. Others had wanted to wait until more were available to create the greatest impact. But the Battle of the Somme had not gone to plan and Haig wanted to achieve a breakthrough as quickly as possible to stem the terrible losses that the BEF was suffering. The date set was 15 September 1916; the date when Britain would unleash its secret weapon upon the unsuspecting enemy –the battle tank.

The obstacles which had so far blunted every British attack were the barbed-wire entanglements, the well-prepared trench systems and machine-guns. Even the heaviest of artillery bombardments had been comparatively ineffective against these and the weeks of fighting on the Somme had achieved virtually nothing. All that, Haig hoped, would change when the tanks would rip through the barbed-wire, crash over the trenches and blast away the German machine-gun emplacements.

The tanks were to be used for an attack on the German positions south of the Albert-Bapaume road with the aim of breaking through to the enemy's third line of defences, the centre of which was the village of Flers. For this just forty-nine machines were available – and of those only thirty-two actually made it to their starting points in time. The other seventeen either broke down or became stuck in ditches on the way to the front.

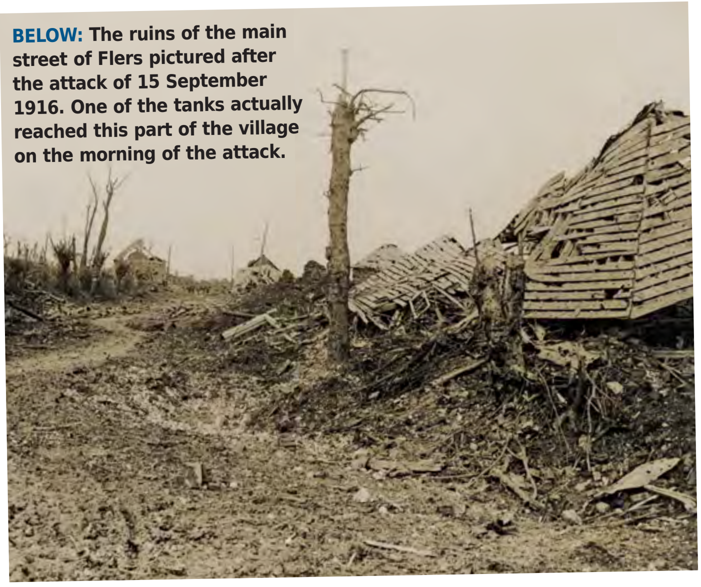
Haig wanted to drive right through all three German lines on the first day of the battle, with the tanks leading the way. General Rawlinson doubted that such an ambitious plan could be achieved and he argued that once the tanks had been used on day one the element of surprise would be lost on any subsequent days of fighting. He suggested that the tanks should only be used at night and withdrawn before dawn, 'without leaving any sign or indication of what they are or what their powers are, except the somewhat distorted reports that are bound to drift back to higher authorities from the demoralised survivors'.

But Haig's view prevailed, and Rawlinson wrote his orders for the battle accordingly. Rather than employing the tanks in a concentrated mass, Haig also ordered the tanks to be used in twos and threes to support the infantry attack against the well-prepared German positions: 'My idea at present is to use them in groups a short distance in front of the infantry line for seizing the strong points and trench junctions. As soon as they have enabled the infantry to gain possession of the [trench] system they would move forward and similarly put them into the next line, and so on until all the objectives have been gained.' ▸▸



ABOVE: **The dawn of a new era in land warfare: four tanks of 'C' Company of the Heavy Section, Machine Gun Corps (as the embryonic Tank Corps was then called), one Male (second from left) and three Female, preparing for the first ever deployment of tanks in battle. Petrol and grease cans lie scattered around whilst the crews tend to their charges. It is often stated that this photograph was taken in a location known as Chimpanzee Valley.** (ALL HISTORIC MILITARY PRESS UNLESS STATED OTHERWISE)

BELOW: The fields over which the Battle of Battle of Flers-Courcelette was fought as they appear today. This view is taken from the German side of the front, with the spire of Flers church clearly visible.



BELOW: The ruins of the main street of Flers pictured after the attack of 15 September 1916. One of the tanks actually reached this part of the village on the morning of the attack.

The morning of 15 September 1916, broke fine but a thin mist hugged the ground. The tanks had remained behind the Allied line overnight to maintain secrecy and had travelled to the front line through the hours of darkness. They passed through the Allied trench network along taped tracks to move to their starting points.

Leaving their starting points thirty-five minutes ahead of the infantry, each group of tanks had been given specific objectives, usually German strong points or trenches. The tank crews were also instructed to assist the divisions to which they were attached if the infantry were held up at any points by stiff enemy resistance.

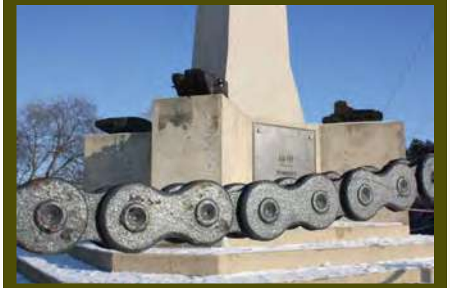
Though few in number and widely dispersed, the tanks had the hoped-for effect and the British infantry following them had a clear view of the reaction of the Germans to this new, terrifying machine: 'It was marvellous,' remembered one soldier. 'That tank went on, rolling and bobbing and swaying in and out of shell-holes, climbing over trees as easy as kiss-your-hand! We were awed! ... The tank waddled on with its guns blazing and we could see Jerry popping up and down, not knowing what to do, whether to stay or to run ... The Jerries waited until our tank was only a few yards away and then fled – or hoped to! The tank just shot them down and the machine-gun post, the gun itself, the dead and the wounded who hadn't been able to run, just disappeared. The tank went right over them.'

The approach of the tanks was certainly a shock to most of the Germans but not a complete surprise: 'We had heard rumours about a new Allied weapon, and our intelligence had sent us notes about a vehicle which they believed was being built in certain French factories,' recalled Leutnant Otto Schulz. 'But when we saw the first real tank it was like nothing we had ever imagined.'

The tanks, though, were far from being a complete success. By the end of the day seventeen of the tanks had been hit or damaged during the attack and of these just seven had been able to limp back to the British lines. Most of the remaining ten were later recovered, though some were still sitting where they had come to rest at the end of the war. Nine others broke down and a further five became stranded in shell holes or trenches, unable to climb out.

Despite the many failures, nine of the tanks actually stayed ahead of the infantry during the attack and dealt with the obstacles they encountered. Nine others made such slow progress that they were overtaken by the infantry, but were used to clear up pockets of German resistance.

TANK MEMORIAL

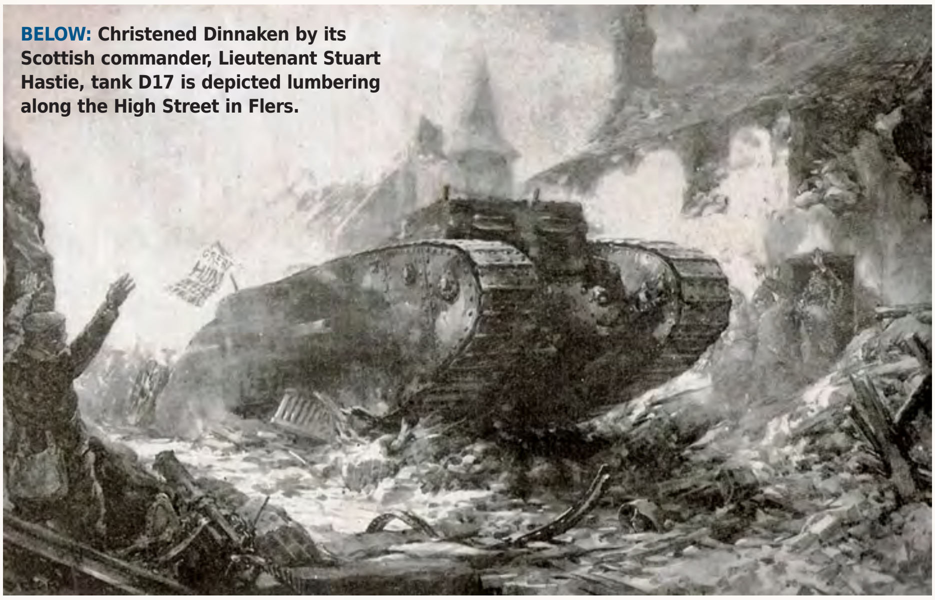


It was in 1919 that the Tank Corps first sought approval for the construction of a Tank Corps memorial on the east side of the Albert-Bapaume road, about one kilometre north-east of Pozières - near the very area where the tanks first went into action on 15 September 1916. Unveiled in July 1922, the memorial takes the form of a granite obelisk, mounted on a granite plinth, with a bronze tank model at each of the four corners. Around the memorial on three sides is a chain – reputed to have been fabricated from early tank driving chains – linked to six-pounder gun barrels.

Though the Battle of Flers-Courcelette was not a failure, and many of the stated objectives were gained, the Allies did not achieve all that had been expected. The fighting continued for a full week before the attack ground to a halt and Haig had to accept that nothing more could be accomplished. Though the great Somme offensive did not officially end until November, it effectively finished when the Battle of Flers failed to achieve the breakout that Haig had wished for.

The mixed performance of the tanks on 15 September led many to question Haig's decision to use the tanks when only such a small number were available. However, as Haig reputedly stated, 'wherever the tanks advanced we took our objectives and where they did not advance we did not take our objectives'.

There were others who regarded the tanks as an expensive gimmick. But there was never any real doubt about the future of this new machine of war. ●



BELOW: Christened Dinnaken by its Scottish commander, Lieutenant Stuart Hastie, tank D17 is depicted lumbering along the High Street in Flers.

'BOY' CORNWELL'S VC ANNOUNCED

JACK TRAVIS Cornwell was born in 1900 in Leyton, Essex. His father, a tram driver, was a former soldier who had seen service in Egypt and South Africa. When Jack was ten, his family moved to Ilford. He had an older brother, a younger sister, and two younger brothers, one of whom would stand-in for him in portraits painted after his death. His other younger brother was also to die in the First World War, as was their father, who had returned to the army in 1914 and died in France a month after his son.

Jack had left school at the age of 13, working first for the tea firm Brooke Bond and, a year later, for the brewer Whitbread. When he turned 15, he volunteered for the Royal Navy, as a 'Boy Second-Class', on sixpence per week! On 27 July 1915, he became Boy Seaman, First Class, doubling his salary to one shilling (5p) per week. After training as a Sight Setter or Gun Layer, Jack joined his first ship, the Town-class light cruiser HMS *Chester*, on 24 April, 1916. At only 5ft 3in tall and weighing just 7st 12lb, Cornwall looked every bit the 'Boy' rating that he was.

Just a month later, HMS *Chester* was involved in the Battle of Jutland. On 31 May 1916, she had been scouting ahead of the 3rd Battlecruiser Squadron when she came under fire from four German cruisers. Three of HMS *Chester*'s four turrets were knocked out; Jack's 'A' turret was the first to be hit. Surrounded by the dead and the dying, for only two of the men in the turret were unharmed, and even though the turret could not fire, Jack, despite his own intestinal wounds, stayed at his post. In addition to his duties as gun-layer, he was also responsible for passing orders to the turret crew. In the absence of orders, he nevertheless awaited them, as was his duty. He was eventually found, still by his gun, by a first aid party.

Thirty-five men, of whom six were 'Boy Seamen', were killed or mortally wounded that day on HMS *Chester* – the cruiser having been hit by seventeen 150mm shells. As well as the dead, there were forty-nine wounded, many of whom lost legs because the open backed gun-shields did not reach the deck and give adequate protection. One of the most seriously injured was Boy 1st Class John Cornwell.

After the action, the ship's medics found Cornwell to be the sole survivor at his gun, shards of steel penetrating his chest,

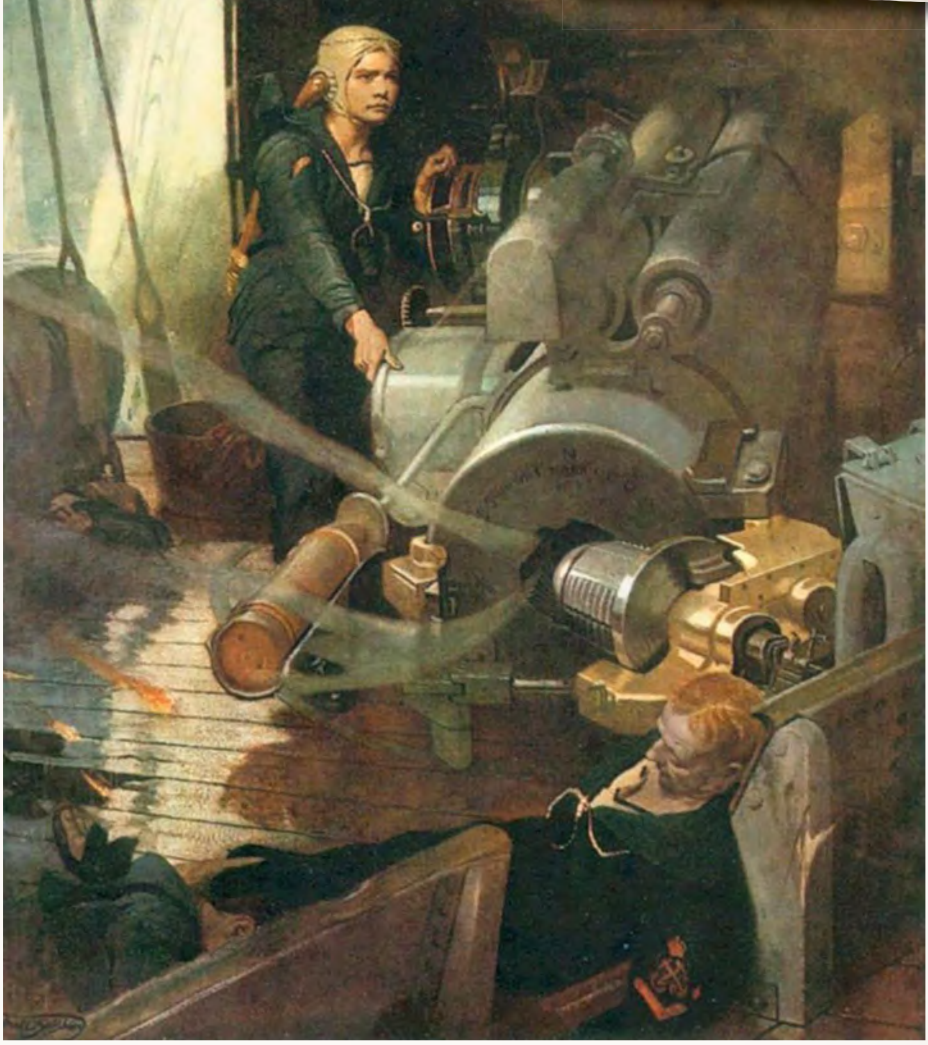
▷▷

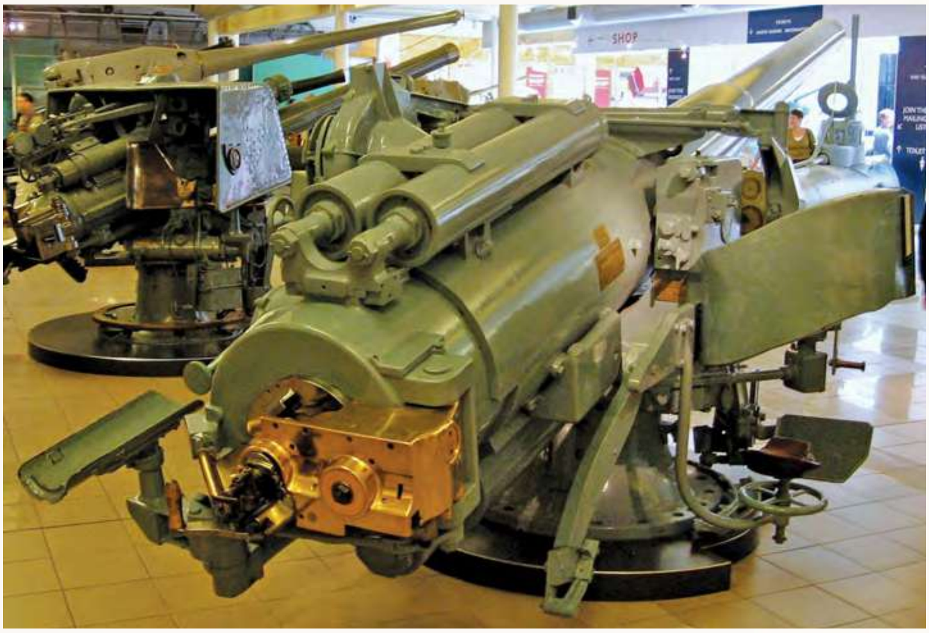
15 SEPTEMBER 1916

MAIN PICTURE: A painting depicting Boy (1st Class) John Travers Cornwell at his post on HMS *Chester* during the Battle of Jutland. (HISTORIC MILITARY PRESS)

RIGHT: This was the photograph of Jack that was used by *The Daily Sketch*; it was actually a picture of his brother. Worse, such was the disregard for accuracy in those days that the cap used for the picture bore the name of another ship, HMS *Lancaster*.

H.M.S. LANCASTER





ABOVE: **The actual BL 5.5 inch Mk.I forecastle gun that Cornwell was manning during the Battle of Jutland. It is on display (minus shield) in the Imperial War Museum.**

looking at the gun sights and still waiting for orders. Being incapable of further action, HMS *Chester* was ordered to the port of Immingham. There, Cornwell was transferred to Grimsby General Hospital where he died on the morning of 2 June 1916.

HMS *Chester*'s skipper, Captain Lawson, wrote the following to Cornwell's mother after the battle: 'I know you would wish to hear of the splendid fortitude and courage shown by your son during the action of 31 May. His devotion to duty was an example to all of us. The wounds which resulted in his death within a short time were received in the first few minutes of the action.

'He remained steadily at his most exposed post on the gun, waiting for orders. His gun would not bear on the enemy; all but two of the ten crew were killed or wounded, and he was the only one who was in such an exposed position. But he felt he might be needed and indeed he might have been; so he stayed there, standing and waiting, under heavy fire, with just his own brave heart, and God's help to support him.'

Cornwell's family could only afford a 'common grave' with no tombstone. A common grave was commonly about twenty-five feet deep, with many coffins placed one on top of another. Some state that Jack's common grave was located in Grimsby, others in London. Jack's coffin had been the last one placed in the common grave.

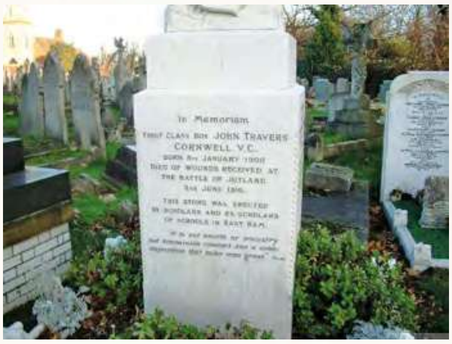
On 7 July 1915, *The Daily Sketch* first told the story of 'The Boy Hero'. On the next day, the paper continued with the story of the burial in an unmarked grave.

Such was the subsequent strength of public feeling that Jack's coffin was disinterred and he was re-buried in Manor Park Cemetery, with full naval honours, on 29 July 1915. The marble headstone was funded by school children, past and present, of the district he had attended. A month later, his father, too, was buried there.

Despite initial Admiralty reluctance, a recommendation was eventually made that Cornwell be awarded the Victoria Cross. Admiralty Beatty wrote: 'The instance of devotion to duty by Boy (1st Class) John Travers Cornwell who was mortally wounded early in the action, but nevertheless remained standing alone at a most exposed post, quietly awaiting orders till the end of the action, with the gun's crew dead and wounded around him ... I regret that he has since died, but I recommend his case for special recognition in justice to his memory and as an acknowledgement of the high example set by him.'

It was on 15 September 1916, that the announcement was published in *The London Gazette*: 'The KING has been graciously pleased to approve the grant of the Victoria Cross to Boy, First Class, John Travers Cornwell, O.N.J.42563 (died 2 June 1916), for the conspicuous act of bravery specified below. Mortally wounded early in the action, Boy, First Class, John Travers Cornwell remained standing alone at a most exposed post, quietly awaiting orders, until the end of the action, with the gun's crew dead and wounded all round him. His age was under sixteen and a half years.'

On 4 November 1916, the Admiralty sent a letter to Cornwell's mother, Alice, enquiring if she would attend an investiture to receive his VC from the King. On 16 November 1916, Alice duly received her son's Victoria Cross from King George V at Buckingham Palace. She was amongst the next-of-kin of ten men 'to whom the VC had been awarded for special gallantry in action, but who had not survived to receive the decorations'. Jack's medals, including his VC with its blue ribbon, marking a pre-1918 naval award, were placed with the Imperial War Museum by his sister in 1968.



ABOVE: **Boy (1st Class) John Travers Cornwell's grave in Manor Park Cemetery.** (COURTESY OF JOHN DAVIES; WWW.GEOGRAPH.ORG)

Cornwell is the third-youngest recipient of the Victoria Cross, and the youngest of the First World War. ●

BELOW: **One of the Royal Navy's Lion-class battlecruisers which fought at the Battle of Jutland, HMS *Princess Royal*. It was on the lead ship of the class that another VC was won at Jutland. At one point in the battle a heavy shell struck HMS *Lion*'s Q-turret, entered the gun-house, burst over the left gun, and killed nearly the whole of the guns' crews. It was only the presence of mind and devotion of the officer of the turret, Major Francis Harvey, RMLI, which saved the warship from sudden destruction; in spite of both his legs being shot off he was able to pass the word down to close the magazine doors and flood the magazines. Harvey thus prevented the fire which started from reaching the ammunition, and so saved the ship, an action for which he was posthumously awarded the Victoria Cross, this also being announced on 15 September 1915.** (US LIBRARY OF CONGRESS)

BELOW: An example of an Albatros D.II, the type of aircraft flown by the Red Baron during his first successful combat, albeit that this is a captured example.

THE RED BARON'S FIRST KILL

17 SEPTEMBER 1916

THE RED Baron, Manfred Albrecht Freiherr von Richthofen, is seen by many as being the most famous air ace of the First World War. Certainly, his was a name that by 1918 had become known around the world – and which is as legendary today as it was then. The eldest son of a Silesian nobleman, von Richthofen's final tally of eighty would make him the highest scoring of all the fighter pilots, of all nationalities, in the First World War. His first victory, however, had taken place on 17 September 1916.

That morning, von Richthofen had taken off at the controls of an Albatros D.II fighter of *Jasta 2*. Observing anti-aircraft fire in the area of Cambrai, he soon encountered a number of Royal Flying Corps aircraft on a bombing raid to Marcoing Station. In his subsequent combat report, von Richthofen describes singling out the last British 'plane. His victim was the Royal Aircraft Factory F.E.2b flown by Second Lieutenant Lionel Morris (pilot) and Captain Tom Rees (observer) of 11 Squadron.

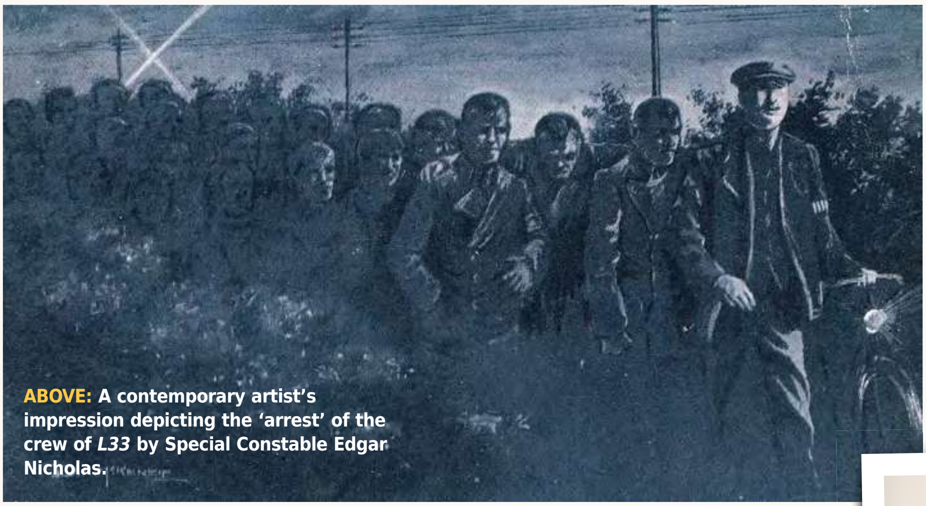
In his autobiography, *Der Rote Kampfflieger* published in 1917, von Richthofen gave this account of his first successful combat: 'My Englishman twisted and turned, going criss-cross. I did not think for a moment that the hostile squadron contained other Englishmen who conceivably might come to the aid of their comrade. I was animated by a single thought: "The man in front of me must come down, whatever happens." At last a favourable moment arrived. My opponent had apparently lost sight of me. Instead of twisting and turning he flew straight along. In a fraction of a second I was at his back with my excellent machine. I gave a short series of shots with my machine gun. I had gone so close that I was afraid I might dash into the Englishman. Suddenly, I nearly yelled with joy for the propeller of the enemy machine had stopped turning. I had shot his engine to pieces; the enemy was compelled to land, for it was impossible for him to reach his own lines. The English machine was curiously swinging to and fro. Probably something had happened to the pilot. The observer was no longer visible. His machine gun was apparently deserted. Obviously I had hit the observer and he had fallen from his seat.

'The Englishman landed close to the flying ground of one of our squadrons. I was so excited that I landed also and my eagerness was so great that I nearly smashed up my machine. The English flying machine and my own stood close together. I rushed to the English machine and saw that a lot of soldiers were running towards my enemy. When I arrived I discovered that my assumption had been correct. I had shot the engine to pieces and both the pilot and observer were severely wounded. The observer died at once and the pilot while being transported to the nearest dressing station. I honoured the fallen enemy by placing a stone on his beautiful grave.' ●

BELOW: **Red Baron, Manfred Albrecht Freiherr von Richthofen.** (BOTH US LIBRARY OF CONGRESS)

ZEPPELIN CREW ARRESTED

24 SEPTEMBER 1916



ABOVE: A contemporary artist's impression depicting the 'arrest' of the crew of *L33* by Special Constable Edgar Nicholas.

ON THE night of 23/24 September 1916, a major raid against London and the Home Counties was undertaken by twelve Zeppelins, including four of the new "Super" Zeppelins. These new giant airships (Nos. *L30, L31, L32* and *L33*) were 650 feet long, seventy-five feet in diameter and weighed some fifty tons. They were capable of a maximum speed of sixty-five miles per hour and could carry a bomb load of five tons.

The second wave, which was made up entirely of the Super Zeppelins, crossed Belgium and headed up the Thames valley towards London. *Kapitänleutnant* Aloys Böcker was in command of *L33*, which was on its maiden flight. Böcker flew across the Thames estuary north of the Black Deep Lightship. At 22.12 hours on the 23rd the airship was fired upon by a Royal Navy destroyer in the Edinburgh channel, but was not hit. Steering inland between Southminster and Burnham-on-Crouch the Zeppelin headed over South Farmbridge and straight for London.

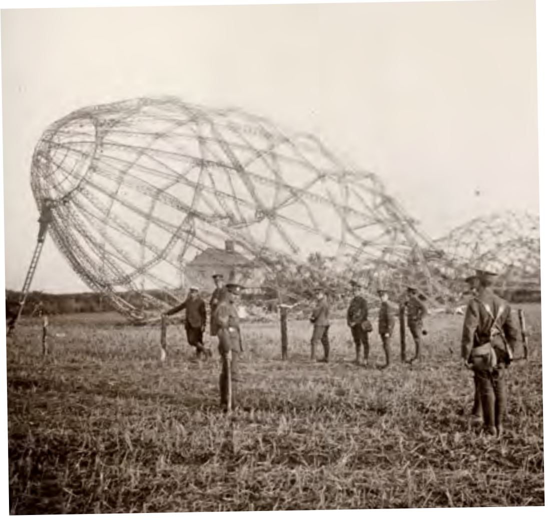
At around 23.40 hours, Böcker dropped four sighting flares on Upminster Common and ten minutes later he discharged the first of his high-explosive bombs at the Sutton's Farm airstrip, but fortunately missed the target. Continuing towards London, he steered between the Beckton and North Woolwich guns. But at 00.10, as he passed over West Ham, Böcker's crew encountered the first shells of the London barrage.

Böcker released his bombs upon Bromley-by-Bow, Bow and Stratford, causing considerable damage. 'Between 00.15 and 00.40 hours starting at Tower Bridge,' Böcker later reported, 'two bombs of 300, eight of 100, 32 of 50 and 20 incendiaries were dropped over the big warehouses along the Thames and over the City. Several enormous fires and the collapse of large groups of houses were observed'.

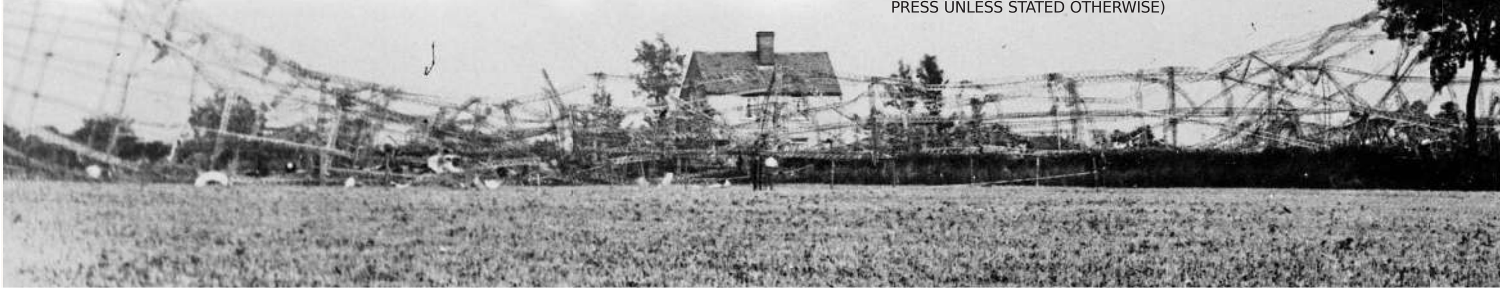
But the Zeppelin did not escape unharmed. The anti-aircraft guns found their mark and one shell exploded inside the airship's hull, just behind the control gondola, destroying one of the hydrogen cells. Shell fragments also tore open a further four hydrogen cells and punctured others. The crew soon heard the dreaded hiss of escaping gas.

Almost immediately *L33* began to lose height. Böcker ordered the helmsman to head for the sea. The airship, however, was dropping at the rate of 800 feet per minute! *L33* was doomed.

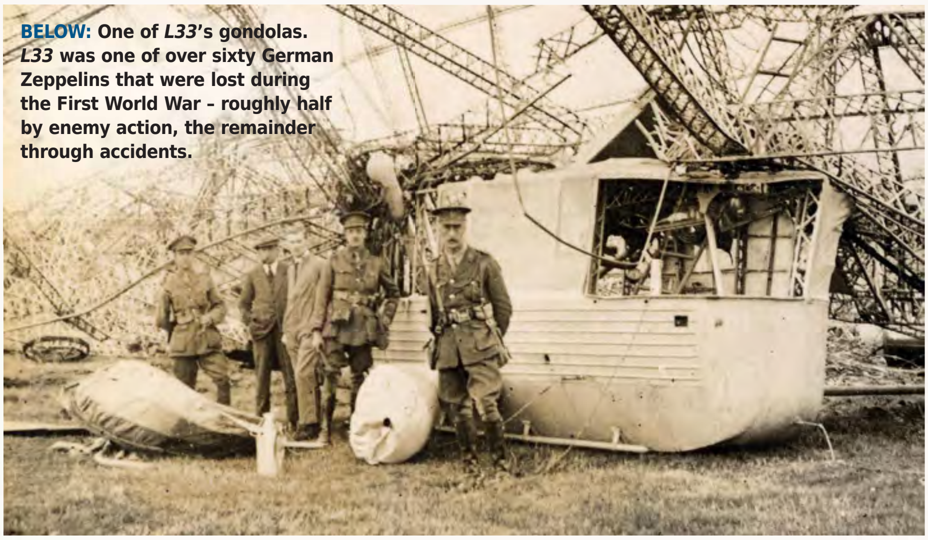
In a futile effort to save his ship, Böcker released the remainder of his water ballast and sent his sailmaker with other members of the crew to try and patch the gaping hole in



ABOVE: The wreckage of Zeppelin *L33* in front of New Hall Cottages. One of the residents of these cottages at the time was one Mrs. Lewis. When Böcker, the captain of *L33*, and his men hammered on the door of her cottage to warn the occupants of their intention to set fire to the Zeppelin, they received no response.



MAIN PICTURE: A general view of the wreckage of *L33* stretching across Glebe Field, across the road, and on to Knapps Field, Little Wigborough. New Hall Cottages can be seen in the background on the right. (ALL IMAGES HISTORIC MILITARY PRESS UNLESS STATED OTHERWISE)



BELOW: One of *L33*'s gondolas. *L33* was one of over sixty German Zeppelins that were lost during the First World War – roughly half by enemy action, the remainder through accidents.

the Zeppelin's side. The men clambered along the duralumin girders in complete darkness with the wind tearing at their clothes, as they tried to patch the holes.

As *L33* flew over Chelmsford it was attacked by a Royal Flying Corps BE2c. For an astonishing twenty minutes, Second Lieutenant Alfred de Bath Brandon, fired his machine-gun into the airship. Yet the Zeppelin failed to ignite.

'After putting on a drum of ammunition,' Brandon explained in his report on the attack, 'I came up behind the Zeppelin and on raising the gun jerked it out of the mounting, the gun and the yoke falling across the nacelle. I managed to replace the gun but in the meantime had passed under and past the Zepp ... On turning I came up from behind and fixed [another] drum of ammunition. The Brock ammunition seemed to be bursting all along it but the Zepp did not catch fire. I was using Brock, Pomeroy and Sparklet [tracer]. I turned again and put on a fresh drum and came up from behind and fired again.' At this moment the Lewis gun jammed and the two combatants lost contact with each other as they moved into a bank of dark grey cloud that covered the horizon.

ABOVE: A propeller and part of *L33*'s lower structure. *L33* had been built at Friedrichshafen's Factory Shed No.1, making its first flight on 30 August 1916.

Böcker steered his stricken machine towards the coast. Everything that could be safely removed was thrown over the side to lighten the ship, including all the fuel and oil leaving just enough for one hour's flying. Even the wireless went overboard after a final urgent appeal for help. The German crew's efforts were all in vain. At approximately 01.20 hours, the airship, with its nose still pointing skywards, struck the ground. A gust of wind pushed the ship a further 100 yards along the field in which it fell, finally coming to rest across a lane near New Hall Farm between Little Wigborough and Peldon, just three miles from Mersea.

The Zeppelin was still largely intact and the crew were able to climb out of the airship – only one man had been injured in the entire episode. These were the only complete unit of armed German personnel to set foot on English soil in the war.

Böcker's first concern was with destroying the Zeppelin before it fell into British hands. He gathered together all the ship's secret documents and threw them into the control car before firing a signal flare into the spilled fuel in the gangway With a great whoosh of gas and flames the Zeppelin exploded.

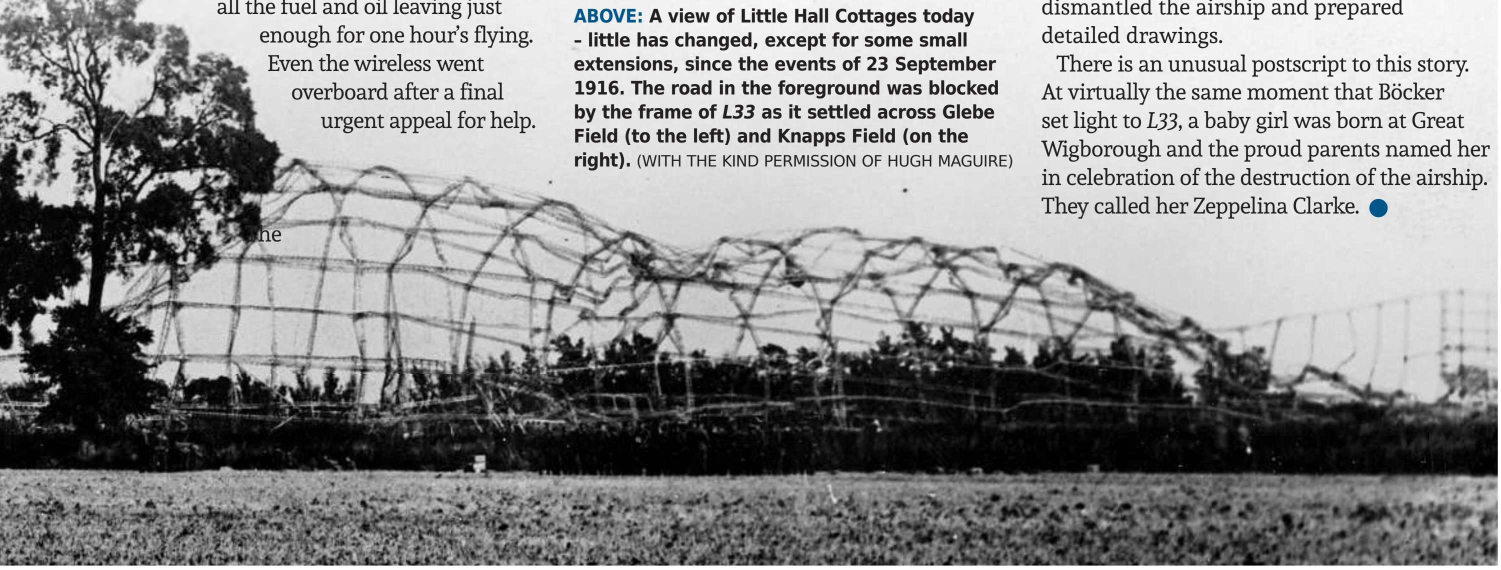
ABOVE: A view of Little Hall Cottages today – little has changed, except for some small extensions, since the events of 23 September 1916. The road in the foreground was blocked by the frame of *L33* as it settled across Glebe Field (to the left) and Knapps Field (on the right). (WITH THE KIND PERMISSION OF HUGH MAGUIRE)

Böcker formed up his men, and the crew of *L33* marched off down a nearby lane past New Hall Farm. Soon after, however, they were arrested by a group of local Police officers.

The wreck of the great airship (which looked to one eye-witness 'like a Crystal Palace without its glass') quickly became a magnet for sightseers. A Reuter's correspondent who visited the scene described what he called 'the gigantic form of one of Germany's latest specimens of frightfulness' lying bent and twisted across a muddy country road: 'We had, of course, all seen the photographs of the fallen Zeppelin, but no camera picture could ever convey an adequate idea of the monster that was lying helpless, but to all intents and purposes intact, in these Essex fields.'

Naturally, the fallen Zeppelin was of even greater interest to the military authorities and the site was quickly placed under armed guard. A team from the Ordnance Survey along with Constructor-Commander C. Campbell and draughtsmen from the Admiralty Air Department carefully dismantled the airship and prepared detailed drawings.

There is an unusual postscript to this story. At virtually the same moment that Böcker set light to *L33*, a baby girl was born at Great Wigborough and the proud parents named her in celebration of the destruction of the airship. They called her Zeppelina Clarke. ●



SHOT DOWN OVER POTTERS BAR

1 OCTOBER 1916

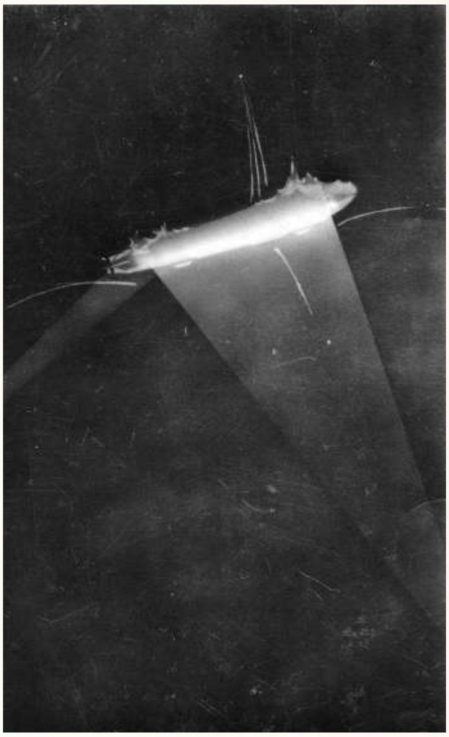
IT WAS calm over the southern part of the North Sea on the evening of 1 October 1916. Seizing the opportunity, the German airships set out to attack targets in the UK. Though eleven set out, only seven crossed the British coast. Even then, the results of their efforts were somewhat insignificant, though one soldier of the Royal Defence Corps was killed when *L.24* dropped its bombs on a landing ground east of Hitchin.

It was the handling of *L.31*, commanded by the veteran *Kapitänleutnant* Heinrich Mathy, which was the boldest that night. Having crossed the coast near Lowestoft at about 20.00 hours, Mathy followed a wide sweeping course with the intention of attacking London from the north. It was not long, however, before *L.31* was in trouble – under fire and persistently hounded by searchlights. Mathy did his best to evade the defenders, but to no avail. Having accepted that he would not reach the capital, his crew started bombing targets they encountered as they took evasive action. The final bomb in *L.31*'s deadly cargo was dropped over Potters Bar in Hertfordshire. It was the last that he and his crew would ever deliver.

Four RFC pilots were patrolling north of London; they had all seen *L.31* illuminated by the searchlights and set off in pursuit. The first to reach it was Second Lieutenant Wulstan J. Tempest. Tempest, who had taken off from North Weald at the controls of a B.E.2c, later described the interception:

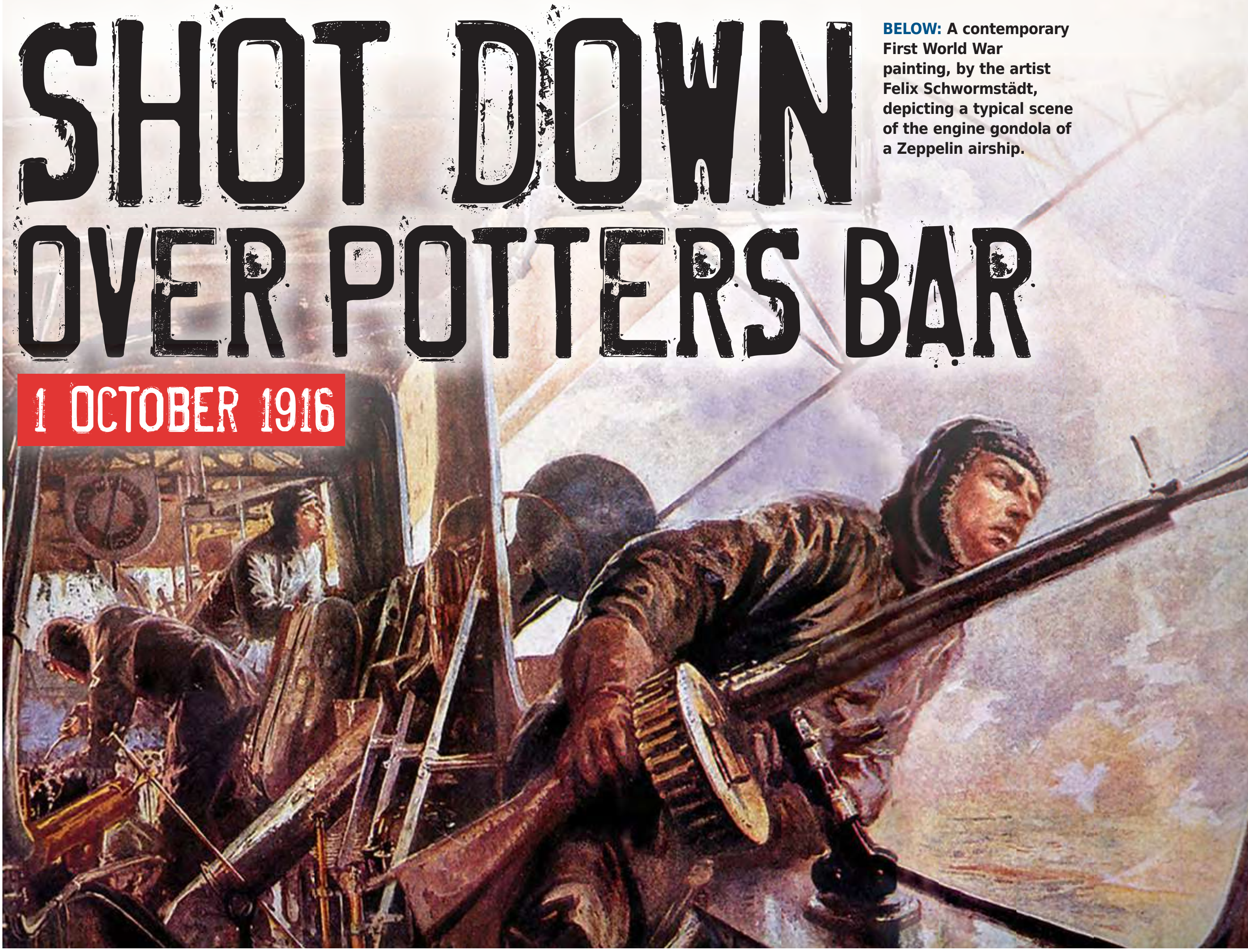
'About 11.45 p.m. I found myself over SW. London at an altitude of 14,500 feet. There was a heavy ground fog on and it was bitterly cold, otherwise the night was beautiful and starlit at the altitude at which I was flying. I was gazing over towards the NE. of London, where the fog was not quite so heavy, when I noticed all the searchlights in that quarter concentrated in an enormous "pyramid". Following them up to the apex, I saw a small cigar-shaped object, which I at once recognized as a Zeppelin, about 15 miles away, and heading straight for London. Previous to this I had chased many imaginary Zepps only to find they were clouds on nearing them.

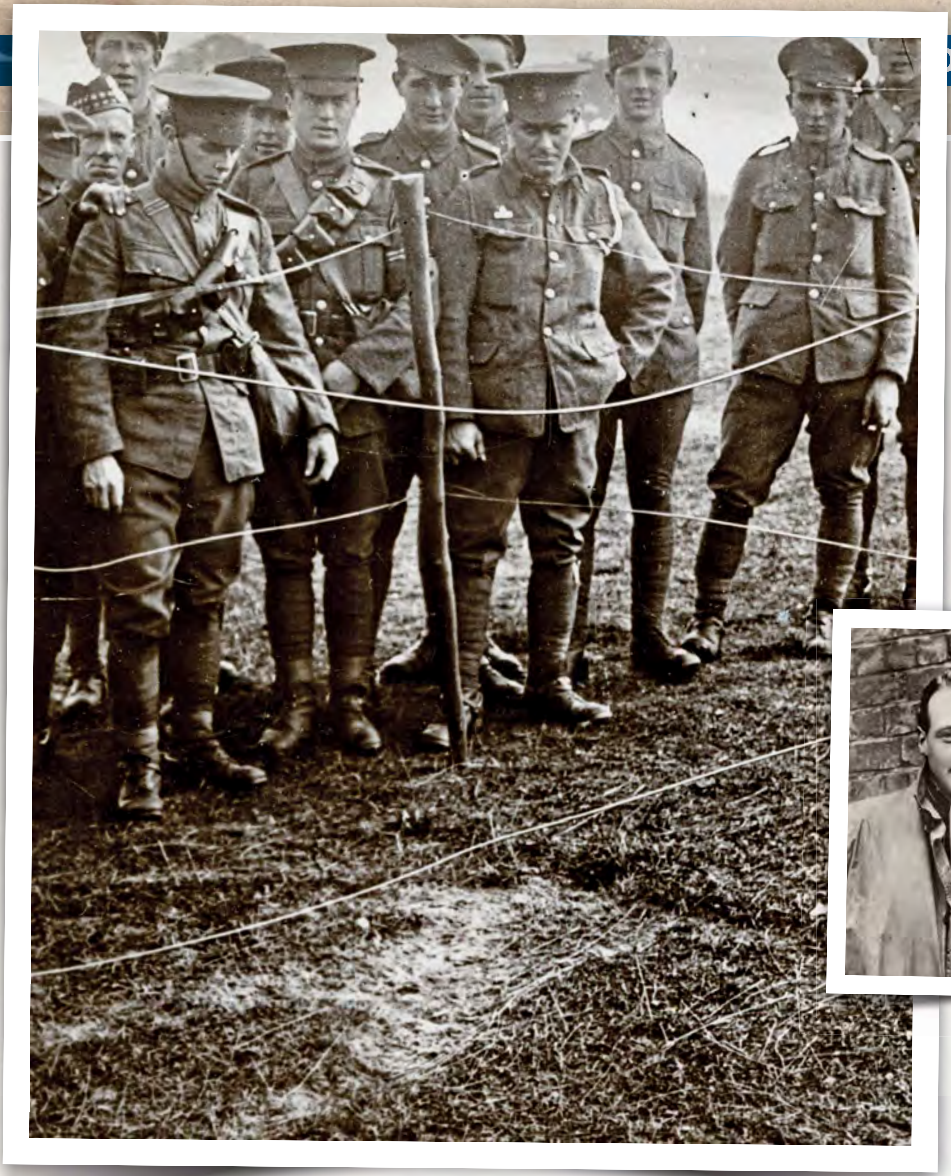
'At first I drew near to my objective very rapidly (as I was on one side of London and it was the other and both heading for the centre of the town): all the time I was having an extremely unpleasant time, as to get to the Zepp I had to pass through a very inferno of bursting shells from the A.A. guns below ...



ABOVE: **Searchlights pick out *L.31* near Potters Bar on the night of 1 October 1916.** (ALL IMAGES HISTORIC MILITARY PRESS)

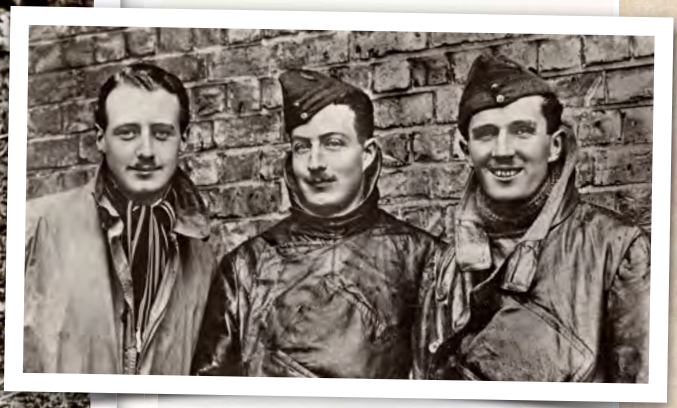
BELOW: **A contemporary First World War painting, by the artist Felix Schwormstädt, depicting a typical scene of the engine gondola of a Zeppelin airship.**





LEFT: Witnesses at the crash site at Potters Bar recall seeing the imprint left by ***Kapitänleutnant*** Heinrich Mathy when his body struck the ground. This image of a similar scene is captioned as being the 'impression made in the ground at Billericay by the Commander falling from the burning Zeppelin'. In this case it was ***Kapitänleutnant*** Werner Peterson of ***L.32*** which was shot down at Snail's Hall Farm, Great Burstead, south of Billericay, by Second Lieutenant Frederick Sowrey on 23/24 September 1916.

BELOW: The victor over Potters Bar, Lieutenant Wulstan J. Tempest DSO (as he was when the picture was taken), can be seen in the centre of this image. On the left is Captain William Leefe Robinson VC, whilst on the right Lieutenant Frederick Sowrey DSO.



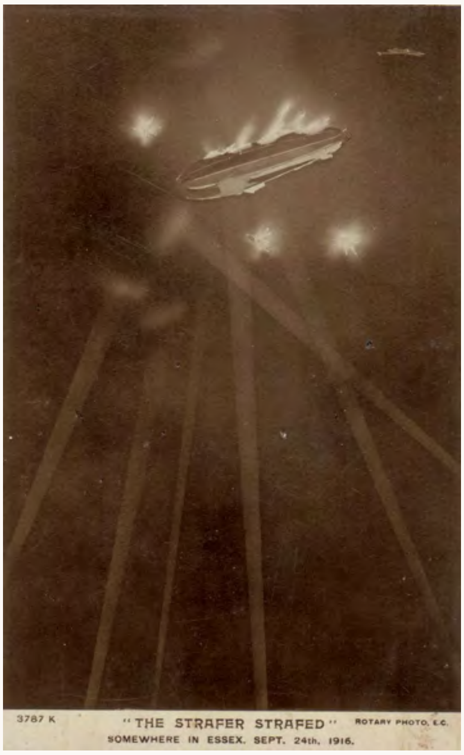
'I made after her at all speed at about 11,500 feet altitude, gradually overhauling her ... As I drew up with the Zeppelin, to my relief I found that I was free from A.A. fire, for the nearest shells were bursting quite three miles army. The Zeppelin was now nearly 15,000 feet high and mounting rapidly. I therefore decided to dive at her, for though I had a slight advantage in speed, she was climbing like a rocket and leaving me standing. I accordingly gave a tremendous pump at my petrol tank, and dived straight at her, firing a burst straight into her as I came. I let her have another burst as I passed under her and then banking my machine over, sat under her tail, and flying along underneath her, pumped lead into her for all I was worth. I could see tracer bullets flying from her in all directions, but I was too close under her for her to concentrate on me.

'As I was firing, I noticed her begin to go red inside like an enormous Chinese lantern and then a flame shot out of the front part of her and I realized she was on fire. She then shot up about 200 feet, paused, and came roaring down straight on to me before I had time to get out of the way. I nose-dived for all I was worth, with the Zepp tearing after me, and expected every minute to be engulfed in the flames. I put my machine into a spin and just managed to corkscrew out of the way as she shot past me, roaring like a furnace.'

Newspaper reporter Michael MacDonagh was working late at his office in London: 'Just before midnight [I] was crossing to Blackfriars Bridge to get a tramcar home, when my attention was attracted by frenzied cries of "Oh! Oh! She's hit!" from some wayfarers who were standing in the middle of the road gazing at the sky in a northern direction. Looking up the clear run of New Bridge Street and Farringdon Road I saw high in the sky a concentrated blaze of searchlights, and in its centre a ruddy glow which rapidly spread into the outline of a blazing airship. Then the searchlights were turned off and the Zeppelin drifted perpendicularly in the darkened sky, a gigantic pyramid of flames, red and orange, like a ruined star falling slowly to earth. Its glare lit up the streets and gave a ruddy tint even to the waters of the Thames.

'The spectacle lasted two or three minutes. It was so horribly fascinating that I felt spellbound – almost suffocated with emotion, ready hysterically to laugh or cry. When at last the doomed airship vanished from sight there arose a shout the like of which I never heard in London before – a hoarse shout of mingled execration, triumph and joy; a swelling shout that appeared to be rising from all parts of the metropolis, ever increasing in force and intensity.'

Mathy's body was found some way from the wreckage of *L.31*, half-embedded in the corner of a field at Potters Bar. His last act had been to leap clear of the falling inferno rather than wait for the crash. According to some accounts, he lived for a short while after striking the earth. In due course Mathy and his crew, all of whom were killed in the crash, were buried in a local churchyard, alongside the men of *SL.11* which had crashed a short distance away. ●


3787 K
"THE STRAFER STRAFED"
ROTARY PHOTO, E.C.
SOMEWHERE IN ESSEX. SEPT. 24th. 1916.

ABOVE: A postcard depicting the shooting down of ***L.32*** on 23/24 September 1916.

GREAT SUBSCRIPTION OFFERS FROM KEY

SUBSCRIBE

TO *YOUR* FAVOURITE MAGAZINE

AND SAVE

1916 SPECIAL

EXCLUSIVE! BBMF Lancaster Update

BATTLE OF BRITAIN: NARROW ESCAPES

A HISTORY OF CONFLICT

BRITAIN AT WAR

HISTORY MONTHLY

BLACK HORSE SPITFIRE Wreckage Recovered

PLUS: LUFTWAFFE: Low-Level Attacks ARNHEM: Holding the Crossroads

WW1 LEADERS

THE GREAT WAR

KITCHENER AT GALLIPOLI

+ CHURCHILL AND THE RACE TO THE SEA

'I TRIED TO TEAR OUT HIS WINDPIPE' Burma Horror Relived

REBEL OF THE RAJ: SIKH VC HERO His story in full

OCTOBER 2015 ISSUE 102

UK £4.50

'YOU LEFT IT A BIT LATE!' Battle of Britain Combat Survivors

'You Left it a Bit Late!'

Battle of Britain 75th ANNIVERSARY 1940-2015

BATTLE OF BRITAIN COMBAT SURVIVORS

The RAF fighter pilots shot down during the Battle of Britain who lived to fight another day were able to recount remarkable tales of courage, endurance and dry humour. **Andy Saunders** selects and adds some detail to a few such accounts made by the men themselves.

'I decided to abandon the aircraft which must have been upside down, because as soon as I released the harness I shot out like a cork from a champagne bottle.'

Sky Black with Germans

FG OFF PAT WELLS, HURRICANE PILOT: 249 SQUADRON

'I had been up on two squadron 'Scrambles' during the day and we were scrambled again in the latish afternoon. I was flying Hurricane GN – O. We climbed up with Flt Lt 'Butch' Barton leading, because the CO, Sqn Ldr John Grandy, had been shot down and wounded a day or so previously. Eventually, we were vectored onto a mass of German aircraft – He 111s, Ju 88s, Dornier 17s, Me 110s and Me 109s. The sky was black with them. I think this was at about 20,000ft. They were flying up the Thames Estuary and obviously bound for London.

We made a copy-book beam attack from the north with full deflection, however, contrary to previous practice where Me 109s were always protecting the rear of the bombers, this time they had them flying on either side of the bombers.

They came down on us as we were attacking and there were some casualties. I was the only one who escaped and got in a decent shot at a He 111 which started streaming coolant and oil from its right engine.

I broke downwards and came up again hoping to join some friends but the sky was empty except for Germans! I made a couple of passes at the formation which drew immediate retaliation from the Me 110s, so I decided to wait for my damaged He 111 to turn for home, which he did quite soon. I followed and practised a bit of air-to-air gunnery on it; frontal, quarter and beam attacks – after which his right engine was windmilling, bombs were dropped and undercarriage down. I was manoeuvring for a final blast up its stern when three Me 109s pounced on me and very shortly thereafter I had no controls, was injured and there was a small fire burning in the well of the cockpit.

Records state that during this action 249 Sqn had a lot of losses and a nil score. Well, that isn't quite true. My He 111 was at least a 'probable'.

I decided to abandon the aircraft which must have been upside down, because as soon as I released the harness I shot out like a cork from a champagne bottle. I estimate this must have been 18,000 ft. Maybe lower.

I delayed opening the parachute until about 10,000ft to get away from the Me 109s which were reported to be shooting up pilots on parachutes.

7 SEPTEMBER 1940

This I do not believe was true. My flying boots shot off at the jerk of the parachute opening! It seemed to take a long time to reach the earth and I had lost a lot of blood so decided to have a little sleep and must have passed out at about 6,000ft.

I landed unconscious and on waking up found some Army people standing over me. I asked the usual question: 'Where am I?' and got the answer 'Dunkirk'. Now, this was a little disconcerting until somebody qualified that statement with 'The Dunkirk near Canterbury.' The soldiers, though, had relieved me of my rather nice gold cufflinks while I was still unconscious.

I was then taken to a civilian doctor in a small nearby town who gave me a couple of tumblers of whisky before I was taken off to hospital. When I got there I found it was the Chartham Lunatic Asylum – not by any means the first disconcerting episode of the day. Whilst I was probably mad to have waded into so many Germans, I didn't think I was yet quite that mad. Fortunately, I discovered that part of the hospital was now an emergency casualty station. From here, I was transferred to Rumwood Court Hospital near Maidstone and after about a week there, quite incredibly, a policeman arrived with my flying boots which I have to this day. He said nobody would touch them when they landed for fear of a German booby-trap! But I never saw my cufflinks again.

After treatment and a bit of leave I re-joined 249 Squadron at North Weald on 1 November 1940.' >>

ABOVE RIGHT: Pat Wells in the cockpit of his Hurricane, GN-O, 249 Squadron.

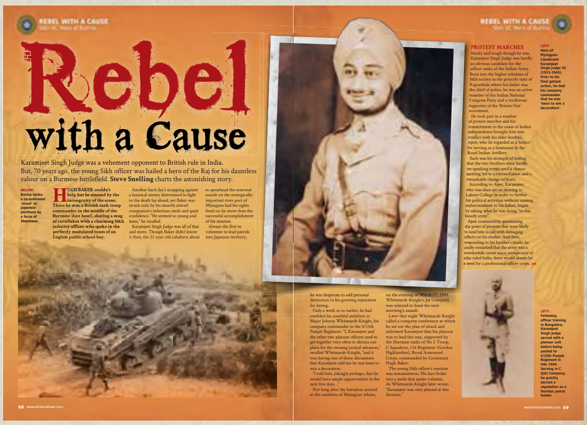
FAR RIGHT: Fg Off Pat Wells, 249 Squadron, 1940.

TOP: Flt Lt 'Butch' Barton of 249 Squadron with 'Wifred', the squadron's pet duck.

TOP RIGHT: Pat Wells carried out multiple attacks on a formation of Heinkel 111s before being shot down on what was later recognised as the first day of the Blitz.

34 www.britainatwar.com

www.britainatwar.com 35


REBEL WITH A CAUSE Sikh VC Hero of Burma

Rebel with a Cause

Karamjeet Singh Judge was a vehement opponent to British rule in India. But, 70 years ago, the young Sikh officer was hailed a hero of the Raj for his dauntless valour on a Burmese battlefield. **Steve Snelling** charts the astonishing story.

HUGH BAKER couldn't help but be amused by the incongruity of the scene. There he was, a British tank troop commander in the middle of the Burmese 'dust bowl', sharing a mug of cornflakes with a charming Sikh infantry officer who spoke in the perfectly modulated tones of an English public school boy.

Another hard day's scrapping against a fanatical enemy determined to fight to the death lay ahead, yet Baker was struck only by his smartly attired companion's infectious smile and quiet confidence. "He seemed so young and keen," he recalled.

Karamjeet Singh Judge was all of that and more. Though Baker didn't know it then, the 21-year-old subaltern about to spearhead the renewed assault on the strategically-important river port of Myingyan had his sights fixed on far more than the successful accomplishment of his mission.

Always the first to volunteer to lead patrols into Japanese territory, he was desperate to add personal distinction to his growing reputation for daring.

Only a week or so earlier, he had confided his youthful ambition to Major Johnny Whitmarsh-Knight, his company commander in the 4/15th Punjab Regiment. "I, Karamjeet and the other two platoon officers used to get together very often to discuss our plans for the ensuing tactical advances," recalled Whitmarsh-Knight, "and it was during one of those discussions that Karamjeet told me he was keen to win a decoration.

"I told him, jokingly perhaps, that he would have ample opportunities in the next few days…"

Not long after the battalion arrived at the outskirts of Myingyan where, on the evening of March 17, 1945 Whitmarsh-Knight's Jat Company was selected to head the next morning's assault.

Later that night Whitmarsh-Knight called a company conference at which he set out the plan of attack and informed Karamjeet that his platoon was to lead the way, supported by the Sherman tanks of No 2 Troop, C Squadron, 116 Regiment (Gordon Highlanders), Royal Armoured Corps, commanded by Lieutenant Hugh Baker.

The young Sikh officer's reaction was instantaneous. His face broke into a smile that spoke volumes. As Whitmarsh-Knight later wrote: "Karamjeet was very pleased at this decision."

PROTEST MARCHES

Stocky and tough though he was, Karamjeet Singh Judge was hardly an obvious candidate for the officer ranks of the Indian Army. Born into the higher echelons of Sikh society in the princely state of Kapurthala where his father was the chief of police, he was an active member of the Indian National Congress Party and a vociferous supporter of the 'Britain Out' movement.

He took part in a number of protest marches and his commitment to the cause of Indian independence brought him into conflict with his elder brother, Ajeet, who he regarded as a 'traitor' for serving as a lieutenant in the Royal Indian Artillery.

Such was his strength of feeling that the two brothers were hardly on speaking terms until a chance meeting led to a reconciliation and a remarkable change of heart.

According to Ajeet, Karamjeet, who was then set on moving to Lahore College in order to further his political activities without causing embarrassment to his father, began by asking what he was doing "in this bloody army".

Ajeet countered by questioning the point of protests that were likely to land him in jail with damaging effects on his studies. And then, responding to his brother's tirade, he coolly remarked that the army was a worthwhile career since, irrespective of who ruled India, there would always be a need for a professional officer corps. >>

BELOW: Burma tanks: a co-ordinated 'shoot' of Japanese positions by a force of Shermans.

LEFT: Hero of Myingyan: Lieutenant Karamjeet Singh Judge VC (1923-1945). Prior to his final gallant action, he told his company commander that he was 'keen to win a decoration'.

LEFT: Following officer training in Bangalore, Karamjeet Singh Judge served with a pioneer unit before being posted to 4/15th Punjab Regiment in late 1944. Serving in C (Jat) Company, he quickly earned a reputation as a fearless patrol leader.

68 www.britainatwar.com

www.britainatwar.com 69

HOLDING THE CROSSROADS Operation Market Garden

HOLDING THE CROSSROADS

In the grounds of a generous-sized house at the junction of two major roads in Oosterbeek, to the west of Arnhem, is a memorial to the 21st Independent Parachute Company. It was here that dwindling numbers of this elite unit helped hold the Germans at bay during the last few crucial days of *Market Garden*.

AT 12.40 hours on the afternoon of Sunday, 17 September 1944, the men of the 21st Independent Parachute Company, under the command of Major Bernard 'Boy' Wilson, jumped from twelve Short Stirlings into the skies over Arnhem. These soldiers were the vanguard of the forces that were tasked with capturing the bridges at Arnhem, the 'Pathfinders' who would mark the landing and drop zones in advance of the main landings.

Wilson's men carried out their task with speed and precision. Just nineteen minutes later the first elements of the main force began arriving in the form of the glider-borne troops of the 1st Airlanding Anti-Tank Battery. Over the next few hours everything that an invading army would need poured into the area around the capital of the Dutch province of Gelderland – either by glider or under a parachute.

From then on, however, little else went well for the British 1st Airborne Division. Fierce resistance by German forces, far more numerous, better equipped and organised than had been anticipated, had prevented most of the airborne troops reaching the Arnhem road bridge. Only elements of Lieutenant Colonel John Frost's 2nd Parachute Battalion and a few men from other units had penetrated as far as the bridge and these were soon cut off and isolated from the rest of Major General Roy Urquhart's division.

Unable to reach the bridge and facing severe and mounting opposition, Urquhart decided to concentrate his division and form a defensive perimeter around the village of Oosterbeek a little more than two miles from Arnhem, the object being to hold out there until the ground forces of the British XXX Corps arrived to support and relieve the lightly-armed airborne troops.

IN THE PERIMETER

The men of the various parachute battalions and other support troops manned the perimeter which day after day slowly shrank, whilst casualties mounted. The 21st Independent Parachute Company, which (with mixed forces of Poles, Glider Pilot Regiment men and Royal Engineers) took on what would normally be reckoned a battalion frontage, in the perimeter's north-west corner. To its right were the remnants of the King's Own Scottish Borders (KSOB).

On one occasion, these positions were visited by Major General Urquhart. 'On one of my trips,' noted Urquhart, 'I went up to see Boy Wilson and his Independent Company who held a number of houses in a heavily wooded district. I wanted to see how he was doing …'

The Major General's arrival, however, was badly timed, coming as it did just as the Germans were launching an attack. 'Suddenly we found ourselves in the middle of a vigorous dispute between the Independent Company and some SS men,' continued Urquhart. 'From the slit trenches on the roadside, faces appeared and men shouted and gesticulated. I braked hard and, with Roberts, made an undignified dive into a ditch. We had run between the lines: the ride was No Man's Land. As little was to be gained by staying put, I decided to make a run for it to the house occupied by Wilson some fifty yards away on a slightly wooded rise.' This building was undoubtedly that named 'Ommershof'. >>

MAIN PICTURE: The Arnhem operation begins. Here the landings on 17 September 1944 are pictured underway. This is the scene at Landing Zone 'Z' near the village of Wolfheze. Sergeant Ron Kent of the 21st Independent Parachute Company recalled his unit's tasks that day: 'One DZ [Drop Zone] and two LZs [Landing Zone] were to be marked. DZ 'X' for the reception of 1st Parachute Brigade was the task of No.1 Platoon. No.1 Section was detailed to do the actual marking with panels spelling out the 'X' and a 'T' for wind direction as well as the working of the Eureka beacon and smoke canisters … No.2 Platoon had the task of marking LZ 'Z' for the glider landing of support elements of 1st Parachute Brigade.' (ALL IMAGES HISTORIC MILITARY PRESS UNLESS STATED OTHERWISE)

BELOW: Lieutenant Colonel W.F.K. 'Sheriff' Thompson (second left with the two haversacks), the Commander of the 1st Airlanding Light Regiment, helps to unload equipment from a damaged Horsa glider on LZ-Z, prior to moving off.

BOTTOM RIGHT: Paratroopers from the Pathfinders of 3 Platoon, 21st Independent Parachute Company prepare to board Short Stirling IVs of 620 Squadron (including QS-V and QS-W) at RAF Fairford, Gloucestershire, on the morning of 17 September 1944. 'At 10.00 hours on that fine Sunday morning,' recalled Ron Kent, 'the Company took off … We had never jumped from Stirlings before.' (R.S.G. MACKAY)

96 www.britainatwar.com

www.britainatwar.com 97

Britain at War is dedicated to exploring every aspect of Britain's involvement in conflicts from the turn of the 20th century through to modern day. From World War I to the Falklands, World War II to Iraq, readers are able to re-live decisive moments in Britain's history through fascinating insight combined with rare and previously unseen photography.

www.britainatwar.com

WIN SIGNED MOSQUITO PRINTS PLUS SPITFIRE DVDs
Britain's Top-Selling Aviation Monthly
FlyPast
MOSQUITO 75th Anniversary
FIGHTER-BOMBER FAMILY
ELVINGTON'S NIGHT FIGHTER
NEW TRICKS FOR FIGHTER ACES
SURVIVING MOSQUITOS IN PROFILE
COMBAT OVER BURMA
THUNDER CITY ON TOUR
Buccaneer goes international
Spotlight
Consolidated Catalina
A detailed look at the U-Boat hunter in action
BATTLE OF BRITAIN 75TH
Fighters gather at Duxford and Biggin Hill
KENNEDY'S LIBERATOR
The ill-fated Project Anvil
SOVIET LEGEND
Flying the MiG-15 fighter

Events listings, pages of classifieds and a comprehensive vehicle price guide
ISSUE 173 OCTOBER 2015
£4.30
CLASSIC MILITARY VEHICLE
Now incorporating MILITARY MACHINES INTERNATIONAL
NOVICE BUYER SPECIAL
What to get, how much to spend – plus our pick of the five best novice military vehicles
Warrior
Its 25-year service with the British Army
Tankfest 2015
Latest MV market news
SHORLAND LAND ROVERS
WW1 PIERCE-ARROW
LANCHESTER ARMOURED CARS

FlyPast is internationally regarded as the magazine for aviation history and heritage. Having pioneered coverage of this fascinating world of 'living history' since 1980, FlyPast still leads the field today. Each issue is packed with news and features on warbird preservation and restoration, museums, and the airshow scene.

www.flypast.com

Classic Military Vehicle magazine is the best selling publication in the UK dedicated to the coverage of all historic military vehicles. From the turn of the 20th century, when warfare started to become increasingly mechanised, right up to the Gulf War of the 1990s, all kinds of military hardware that featured in conflicts around the world is profiled extensively in Classic Military Vehicle magazine every month.

www.classicmilitaryvehicle.com

ALSO AVAILABLE DIGITALLY:

Available on iTunes | Available on the App Store | Available on Google play | Available on BlackBerry | Available on kindle fire | Available on PC, Mac & Windows 8

Available on PC, Mac, Blackberry and Windows 8 from pocketmags.com

1070/15

FOR THE LATEST SUBSCRIPTION DEALS

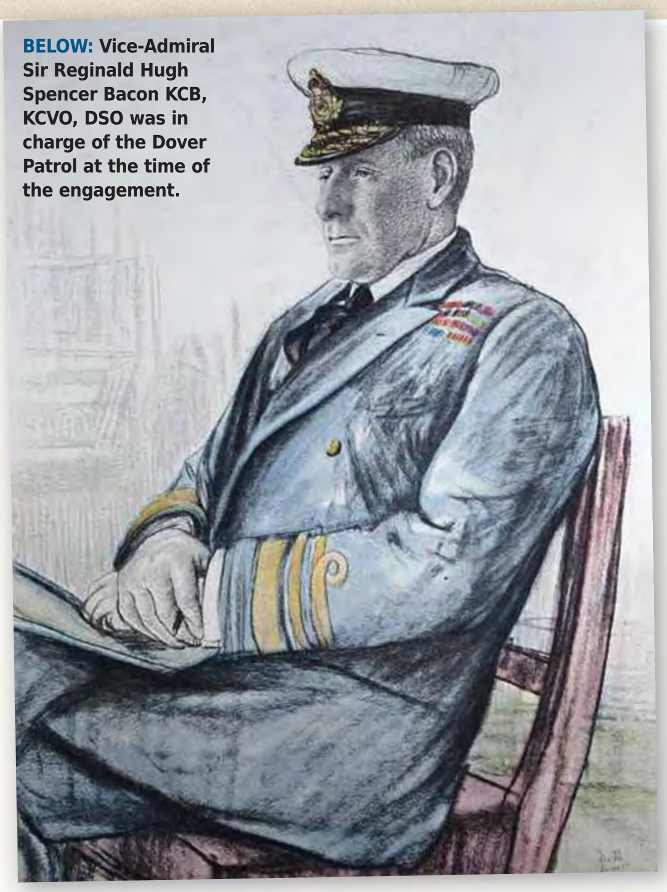
VISIT:
www.keypublishing.com/shop

PHONE:
(UK) 01780 480404 (Overseas) +44 1780 480404

THE BATTLE OF DOVER STRAIT

26 OCTOBER 1916

AS SOON as it was evident in 1914 that British troops were to be fighting in France the defence of the English Channel became a matter of the highest priority. The Royal Navy mounted patrols across the Channel and a barrier was designed – the Dover Barrage. Work on the Barrage began in February 1915 and it consisted of light steel nets anchored to the sea bed at various depths and used to entangle German submarines. The nets were accompanied by layers of mines also placed at differing depths. In October 1916, the commander of the German Flanders Flottila, based at Zeebrugge, Ludwig von Schroeder, decided to attempt to breach the Barrage and attack Allied shipping.



BELOW: Vice-Admiral Sir Reginald Hugh Spencer Bacon KCB, KCVO, DSO was in charge of the Dover Patrol at the time of the engagement.

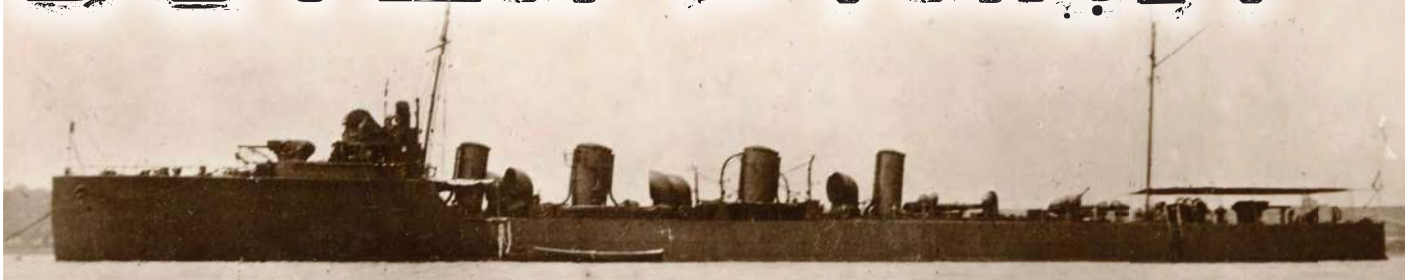
With twenty-three torpedo boat destroyers, Schroeder set off on the night of 26-27 October. All that was guarding the Dover Barrage that night was the old destroyer HMS *Flint*, the yacht *Ombra*, and the naval trawler *H.E. Straud*. There were a number of small boats manning the Barrage's anti-submarine nets but each boat carried just a single rifle for its defence.

The boats of the 3rd and 9th Torpedo Flotillas divided into five groups. One half-flotilla of torpedo boats caught the British transport ship *Queen* off Godwin Sands. Luckily she had no troops on board and she was sunk after her crew had been taken off. Another, the 5th Half-Flotilla, first encountered the boats of the 10th Drifter Division. Upon hearing shots, HMS *Flint* went to investigate. It signaled the approaching ships only to receive a similar reply. This confused *Flint*'s skipper who decided that, as the Germans had never attempted such a bold move against the Barrage for many months, that the vessels must be Royal Navy destroyers and that the drifters had been attacked by a German submarine.

Flint was therefore taken by surprise when the Germans turned their guns on the British destroyer. The old destroyer immediately tried to respond and attempted to ram one of the enemy boats. After a brief fight *Flint* was overwhelmed and sunk by a heavy combination of gunfire and torpedoes. Six of the drifters were also sunk, and the yacht *Ombra* was damaged before the Half-Flotilla withdrew.

Help, though, was soon on its way in the shape of six Tribal-class destroyers of the Dover Patrol. They split into two groups with *Viking*, *Mohawk*, and *Tartar* in one group and *Nubian*, *Amazon* and *Cossack* forming the second group. *Nubian* raced far ahead of her group, and was the first Royal Navy ship to reach the scene of *Flint*'s sinking.

In a repetition of *Flint*'s engagement, in the dark *Nubian* also misidentified the German boats and it was only when the Germans opened fire on her that the crew realised their mistake. As with *Flint*, *Nubian* attempted to ram one of the torpedo destroyers, but she was hit by a torpedo which blew off her bows. *Amazon* and *Cossack* soon arrived and joined in the action, with *Amazon* being badly damaged. The second group of destroyers were also in action with other German boats, resulting in damage to *Mohawk*. In this successful encounter, the Germans had just one of their vessels damaged. ●



ABOVE: The Tribal-class destroyer HMS *Nubian*. After the engagement, *Nubian* made it back to port. As the war was at its height the Admiralty did not want to lose the ship, so it was decided to join together the forward end of HMS *Zulu* (a Tribal-class destroyer that had been mined on 8 November 1916) and the rear and mid sections of *Nubian* to make another Tribal-class destroyer, which was named *Zubian*. The new ship caused much confusion amongst the Germans who could not find any such-named ship being constructed! *Zubian* went on to have a very active career, sinking *UC-50* and taking part in the 1918 raid on Ostend. (BOTH HISTORIC MILITARY PRESS)

BELOW: British Army soldiers moving in devastated, wet and muddy conditions on the Ancre battlefield in November 1916. (COURTESY OF THE AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL; H08519)

RIGHT: The devastation in the valley of the Ancre by November 1916 is evident in this image. (HISTORIC MILITARY PRESS)

13 NOVEMBER 1916

THE BATTLE OF THE ANCRE

THE GREAT British offensive on the Somme had persisted throughout the autumn of 1916 with constant, if small gains putting increasing pressure upon German resources and manpower. Not content with this gradual erosion of the strength of the enemy, Field Marshal Haig still sought to achieve a great breakthrough – one that would tip the tide of the war irrevocably in favour of the Allies. It has been suggested that Haig wanted to be able to present a major triumph at a high-level Allied conference scheduled to take place at Chantilly on 15 November.

With winter closing in on the men in the trenches, Haig prepared for his final large-scale attack of the Somme offensive (and indeed the whole year) in the middle of October, but poor weather led to the attack being delayed until November. This attack was to be delivered by Lieutenant General Sir Hubert de la Poer Gough's Fifth Army but a number of his divisional commanders warned that their men were too exhausted to mount a major operation and that conditions on the ground were too difficult. Gough disregarded their concerns, or felt that these were factors that he could not allow to influence his planning, for he knew that this was the BEF's last great chance of the year. That attack was delivered on the morning of 13 November with the objective of capturing Beaumont-Hamel and Serre on the heights to the north of the River Ancre, a tributary of the Somme. Their capture would give the British considerable tactical advantages which they could exploit in the spring of 1917 when the weather improved and the offensive would be resumed and the Germans pushed back across the French border.

The assault was preceded by an enormous artillery barrage which had lasted a full seven days, and was twice as heavy as that which preceded the attack on the first day of the Battle of the Somme. Then, at around 06.00 hours on the appointed day, as a thick winter mist shrouded the marshes of the Ancre, the guns divided for their special tasks. 'One great mass lifted, and created with its shells an appalling stationary barrage on the enemy's communication trenches and reserve position,' wrote a contemporary historian. 'Another mass operated in front of the waves of infantry attack and formed the "creeping" barrage that kept down enemy machine gunners and cleared the last obstacle of the advance.'

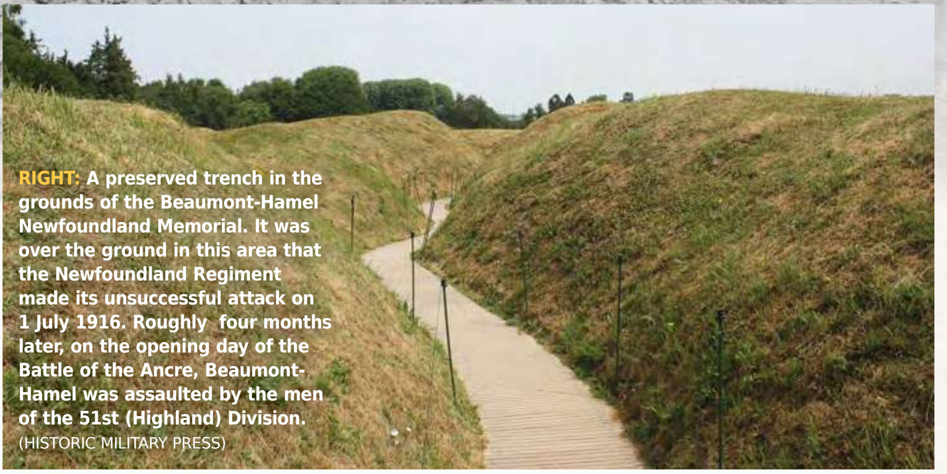
What was described as a 'mobile wall of shells' and a 'distant stationary hurricane of shrapnel and heavy high explosive' were operated with tremendous violence.

This double effect confused the Germans. They sat in their deep dugouts waiting for the barrage to lift, only to be caught still in their shelters by the attackers storming their positions. The German artillery was surprised to an even greater degree and across almost half the front attacked there was no response from the German gunners who limbered up their guns to save them being captured by the onrushing British infantry. What further confounded the Germans was that for many days the British had simulated an attack each morning, and it was not immediately obvious to the defenders that the attack was a genuine one.

The main initial objective was the vanished village of Beaumont-Hamel, considered to be the strongest point along the entire German front. The houses had disappeared, but beneath their ruins was an underground town. Two cemeteries, two quarries, and a chalk-pit were worked into the defensive system. Single dug-outs were of such a size that they could hold 400 men. Five lines of trenches with wire entanglements formed the approach to the village, which rested in a hollow on a slope rising to the Serre plateau. ▸▸

LEFT: **The remains of the railway station at Beaumont-Hamel pictured after the area was captured.** (COURTESY OF THE AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL; H08984)

BELOW: **A pack horse laden with trench boots is led through the mud near Beaumont-Hamel in November 1916.** (HISTORIC MILITARY PRESS)



RIGHT: **A preserved trench in the grounds of the Beaumont-Hamel Newfoundland Memorial. It was over the ground in this area that the Newfoundland Regiment made its unsuccessful attack on 1 July 1916. Roughly four months later, on the opening day of the Battle of the Ancre, Beaumont-Hamel was assaulted by the men of the 51st (Highland) Division.** (HISTORIC MILITARY PRESS)

Luckily two days of fine weather had hardened the ground and conditions underfoot were not as treacherous as had been feared. Haig described the initial successes in his official despatch: 'Our troops advanced on the enemy's position through dense fog, and rapidly entered his first line trenches on almost the whole of the front attacked, from east of Schwaben Redoubt to the north of Serre. South of the Ancre, where our assault was directed northwards against the enemy's trenches on the northern slopes of the Thiepval ridge, it met with a success altogether remarkable for rapidity of execution and lightness of cost. By 7.20 a.m. our objectives east of St. Pierre Divion had been captured, and the Germans in and about that hamlet were hemmed in between our troops and the river. Many of the enemy were driven into their dugouts and surrendered, and at 9.0 a.m. the number of prisoners was actually greater than the attacking force. St. Pierre Divion soon fell, and in this area nearly 1,400 prisoners were taken by a single division at the expense of less than 600 casualties. The rest of our forces operating south of the Ancre attained their objectives with equal completeness and success.'

ABOVE: **The valley of the River Ancre looking towards Beaucourt-sur-l'Ancre. It was in this area that men of the Royal Naval Division's Hood Battalion attacked on the morning of 13 November 1916.** (HISTORIC MILITARY PRESS)

Beaumont-Hamel was also eventually taken – at bayonet point – after what was described as 'the whirlwind method of intensive bombardment against positions measured almost to an inch by months of aerial study and hill observation gave wings of victory to the charging infantry'.

No such success was enjoyed by the troops that attacked across the Ancre marsh and river against the low eastern sector of St Pierre Divion. Charge after charge was made against the village and the hillside, but the German's principal line of works remained unbroken.

The main fighting ended on 18 November, though operations on a small scale continued throughout the winter and indeed the British were placed in a strong position for a spring offensive. The Germans, however, were not going to wait to be attacked in unfavourable circumstances and they withdrew to the Hindenburg Line in March 1917, in effect negating the Fifth Army's achievements.

Allied losses were estimated at around 22,000 and those of the Germans 45,000, including some 7,000 who were taken prisoner. Haig's final words on the battle were that the three main objectives with which the BEF had commenced the offensive in July had been achieved. These were that Verdun had been relieved; the main German forces had been held on the western front; and the enemy's strength had been very considerably worn down.

'Any one of these three results is in itself,' Haig declared, was 'sufficient to justify the Somme battle'. ●

END OF THE BATTLE OF THE SOMME

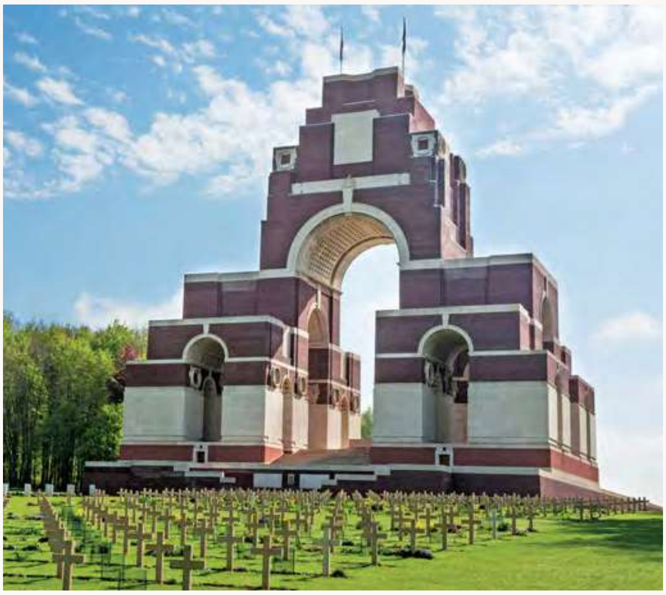
18 NOVEMBER 1916

FOR FOUR months the British army had been mounting attack after attack upon the German positions along the Somme. Although the initial assaults in July failed to bring about the breakthrough that Field Marshal Haig had planned for, the British persisted, gradually wearing the Germans down. Whilst the attacks after the first three days until the middle of July were on a far smaller scale, casualties on both sides were considerable. Nevertheless Contalmaison and Mametz Wood in the German front line were captured, paving the way for an assault upon the German second line defences along the Bazentin Ridge.

The attack was delivered on 14 July by General Rawlinson's Fourth Army and at first was regarded as a great success, but the Germans held onto, and even recovered, some ground. Throughout the rest of July and into the first two weeks of September, British and Commonwealth troops won more ground at Delville Wood, Pozières, Guillemont and Ginchy. Although the Allies lost heavily, so too did the Germans, who were under persistent fire from the British artillery.

German morale, at first so high, was slowly being eroded. It seemed that the British and their Imperial allies would not stop. The Germans were now effectively fighting on three fronts, with enormous numbers of men tied down in the East facing the Russians, the great battle against the French at Verdun, and now, to the west, the British.

The Germans knew that if they did not adopt a different strategy other than simply trying to parry the British attacks, they would be beaten. At the end of August the Chief of the German General Staff, von Falkenhayn, was sacked and replaced by Field Marshal Hindenberg, who immediately put in hand measures to build a stronger and short defensive line where the Germans would stand a better chance of holding off the British. This was the *Siegfriedstellung*, or Hindenburg Line.



As if to prove that the German fears were correct, the British renewed their offensive on 15 September by attacking at Courcelette and Flers, where the appearance of the British tanks further eroded German morale. The Germans were finding it increasingly difficult to fend off the British attacks, losing Thiepval Ridge and the Ancre Heights in September and November.

The Germans had to hold onto their positions on the Somme until the Hindenberg Line was ready. Fortunately for them the onset of winter brought large-scale operations to a close on the Somme, and in the spring of 1917 they were able to withdraw to the Hindenberg Line. The Battle of the Somme officially ended on 18 November 1916.

Whilst the Battle of the Somme is often considered to have been a terrible waste of British lives, it was seen more as an Allied success by the enemy. This is revealed in the words of one of the German staff officers: 'The Somme was the muddy grave of the German field army, and of the faith in the infallibility of the German leadership, dug by British industry and its shells ... The German Supreme Command, which entered the war with enormous superiority, was defeated by the superior technique of its opponents. It had fallen behind in the application of destructive forces, and was compelled to throw division after division without protection against them into the cauldron of the battle of annihilation.' ●

TOP RIGHT: Towering over the landscape of the Somme battlefield, the Thiepval Memorial bears the names of more than 72,000 officers and men of the United Kingdom and South African forces who have no known grave. The memorial can be found on the D73, next to the village of Thiepval, off the main Bapaume to Albert road.
(WWW.SHUTTERSTOCK.COM)

LEFT: Construction work underway at Thiepval in the 1930s.
(COURTESY OF THE CWGC)

TOP: Some of those who lost their lives in the sinking of HMHS *Britannic* were subsequently buried in Piraeus Naval and Consular Cemetery on the western outskirts of Piraeus. Of the 1,066 crew and medical staff on board, only thirty (twenty-one crew plus one officer and eight men of the Royal Army Medical Corps) were to lose their lives; some of these individuals were probably in one of the lifeboats that drifted into the propellers before the engines were stopped. (COURTESY OF THE CWGC)

THE WHITE Star liner *Britannic* was the third and last-built of the famous, but ill-fated *Olympic* class of trans-Atlantic liners. Her two sisters were *Titanic* and *Olympic*. She was launched on 26 February 1914 and fitted out and completed on 12 December 1915. Less than two weeks later she entered service with the Admiralty as His Majesty's Hospital Ship *Britannic* with capacity for 3,300 patients, in twenty-three wards.

After helping recover the wounded from the Dardanelles in 1915 *Britannic* was ordered to the Island of Lemnos (now Limnos) in the Aegean Sea to recover sick and wounded from the Salonika campaign. On the morning of Tuesday, 21 November, *Britannic* was passing through the Zea Channel between the Greek mainland and the Cyclades archipelago. At 08.00 hours the breakfast gong summoned those members of the crew and medical personnel who were off duty to breakfast. No sooner had the men and women settled down to eat when a crash shook the length of the magnificent 903-feet-long ship. Though at first it was thought the hospital ship had been torpedoed, in reality she had struck a mine that had been laid by the German submarine *U-73*. The impact from the explosion blew a hole in the ship's port bow. Moments later a second explosion occurred when the coal bunkers ignited.

Despite the severe damage she had received, *Britannic*'s system of bulkheads, designed to avert the same kind of disaster that had befallen *Titanic*, should have prevented the entire ship from being flooded. But for some reason a number of the watertight doors failed to close properly and *Britannic* soon reached her flooding limit.

Even at this point *Britannic* still stood a good chance of staying afloat, but nurses had opened a large number of portholes to ventilate the wards in readiness for the arrival of their next intake of patients along the lower decks. The ship tilted downwards within minutes of the explosion and as the ship's list increased, water reached these portholes and began entering aft from the bulkhead between boiler rooms four and five. With more than six compartments flooded, the *Britannic* could not stay afloat.

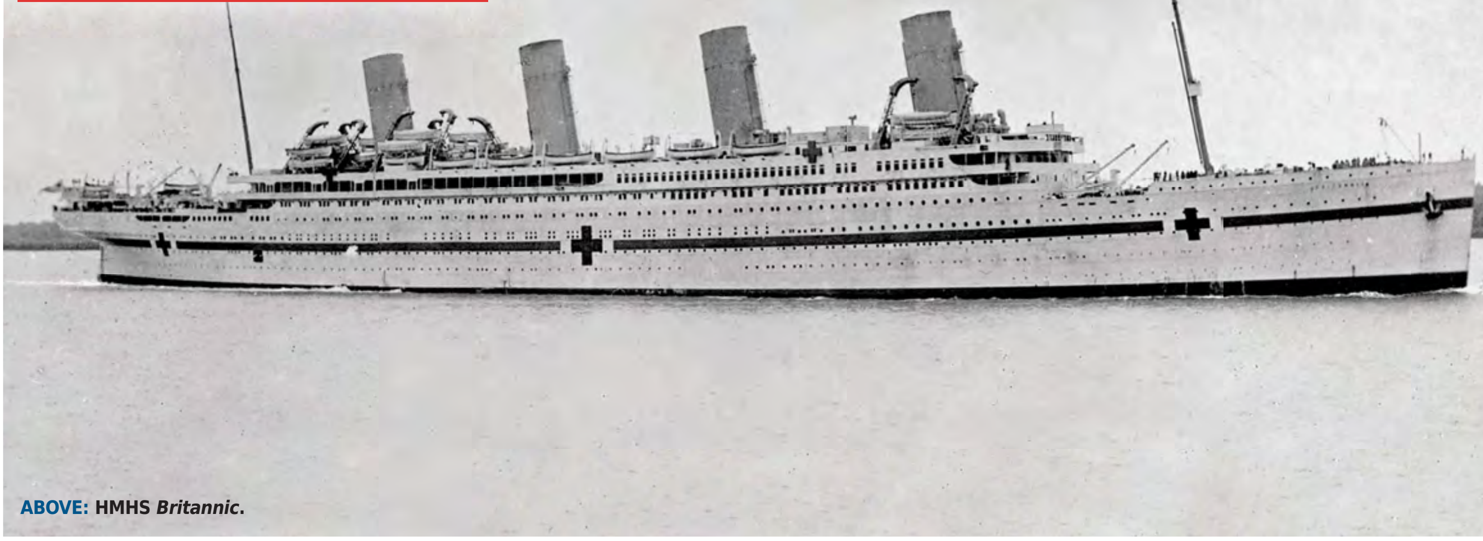
Captain Bartlett drove the ship forward in a vain attempt to beach the rapidly sinking vessel on Kea Island. Meanwhile, the majority of the 1,066 people on board (crew and medical staff) attempted to abandon ship as she rolled over onto her starboard side.

'She dipped her head a little, then a little lower and still lower,' recalled Nurse Violet Constance Jessop who had survived both the sinking of *Titanic* and *Olympic*'s collision with the cruiser HMS *Hawke*. 'All the deck machinery fell into the sea like a child's toys. Then she took a fearful plunge, her stern rearing hundreds of feet into the air until with a final roar, she disappeared into the depths, the noise of her going resounding through the water with undreamt-of violence.'

Despite the fact that only thirty lives were lost when *Britannic* went down, she was in fact the largest ship to be sunk in the First World War. ●

HMHS BRITANNIC SUNK

21 NOVEMBER 1916



ABOVE: HMHS *Britannic*.

MAIN PICTURE: **An example of an L.V.G. reconnaissance/bomber aircraft such as that flown by *Deck Offizier* Paul Brandt and *Leutnant* Walther Ilges on 28 November 1916.** (BUNDESARCHIV; BILD 104-0321)

28 NOVEMBER 1916

DAYLIGHT RAID ON LONDON

DESPITE THE best efforts of the German airship crews, 1916 undoubtedly marked the turning point in the success of their bombing campaign against the UK. Gradually the British defences, both in the air and on the ground, were tipping the balance in the favour of the Allies. The Germans, therefore, sought alternatives, primarily in the form of heavier-than-air craft.

Pretty well until the end of 1916, it had been the Kentish towns, and particularly Dover, that had borne the brunt of the German aircraft bombing raids. In October, for example, there had been two minor attacks. The sound of an aero engine off Sheerness in the early hours of the 22nd heralded the delivery of four bombs, three of which fell in the harbour and one on the dockyard railway station. Another enemy aircraft ventured up the Thames estuary an hour later, but no bombs were dropped. So far London had escaped the attention of the German aeroplanes. All that, though, was about to change.

On the morning of 28 November, *Deck Offizier* Paul Brandt (pilot) and *Leutnant* Walther Ilges (the observer) took off from their base at Mariakerke, in Belgium, in a German Navy L.V.G bomber. Powered by a 225hp Mercedes engine, their aircraft, which had a range of about 200 miles and a top speed of eighty miles an hour, carried six 10kg high explosive bombs. Their mission, notes the Official History, was to attack the Admiralty offices in Whitehall (other sources state that their primary role was reconnaissance).

ABOVE: **As the German aircraft offensive gathered momentum into and through 1917, larger and more capable aircraft were used – such as the Gotha G.IV seen here.**

The weather that day was fine but hazy. Brandt's and Ilges' circuitous route took them over Essex and then up the Thames estuary. Flying high, en route they took the opportunity to photograph potential targets – airfields, docks, oil storage tanks, ammunition works, factories, government buildings and so. Alltogether, Ilges took a total of twenty shots.

By midday the L.V.G. was over London. The author Neil Hanson notes that 'very few people stopped to stare in wonder at the silvery shape of an aircraft passing overhead. Reporters could later find only two people who claimed to have witnessed it and neither connected that extraordinary sight with the explosions that rumbled through the streets between Victoria and Knightsbridge a few minutes later.'

BELOW: **A commercially-produced German postcard depicting members of ground crew bombing-up a Gotha G.V.**

To most Londoners, the first that they knew of the raider's presence over the capital was when the bombs began to fall. Dropped from an altitude of 13,000 feet, any pretence of accuracy by aiming at the Admiralty was lost, as the six bombs struck the ground and exploded a mile or so from there between Brampton Road and Victoria Station. The damage was not serious, though one bakery, an office, some mews houses in Belgravia and the Palace of Varieties Music Hall near Victoria Station were all hit. Ten people were injured in the course of the raid.

Neither the photographs they took, nor Brandt and Ilges themselves, made it back to their base. On the homeward journey their engine gave trouble; everything that could be, including the camera and plates, was thrown overboard in an effort to make it to land. The pair was able to make it to the French coast, the L.V.G. eventually touching down near Boulogne, where it was captured. ●

BULLETS AND BILLETS FIRST PUBLISHED

1 DECEMBER 1916

MAIN IMAGE: **A portrait of Charles Bairnsfather, who was normally known by his middle name of Bruce, in uniform.** (US LIBRARY OF CONGRESS)

BELOW RIGHT: **The title page of *Bullets and Billets.*** (ALL IMAGES HISTORIC MILITARY PRESS UNLESS STATED OTHERWISE)

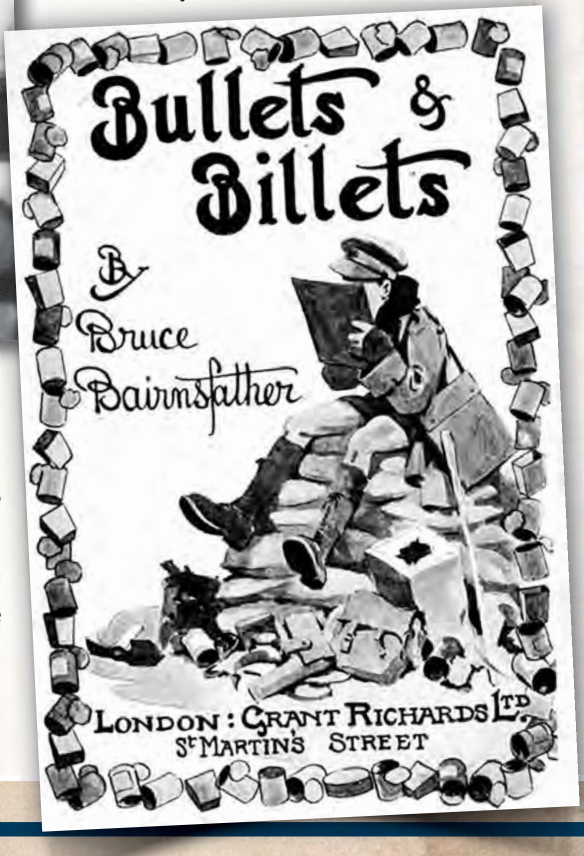
BORN INTO a military family at Muree on India's North West Frontier (now Pakistan) on 9 July 1887, Charles Bruce Bairnsfather is one of the best known of the UK's First World War artists and cartoonists.

Educated at Rudyard Kipling's old school, Bairnsfather passed the Army entrance exam and enlisted in the Militia. He then studied at commercial art school but re-enlisted with the Royal Warwickshire Regiment when war broke out in 1914. It was as a Second Lieutenant in the 1st Battalion that he arrived on the Western Front, going on to experience the sights and sounds that ultimately led to him becoming a household name by the end of the war.

Bairnsfather was in the front line near Ypres in December 1914 when he became embroiled in the Christmas Truce. He later described what he witnessed: 'Walking about the trench a little later, discussing the curious affair of the night before, we suddenly became aware of the fact that we were seeing a lot of evidences of Germans. Heads were bobbing about and showing over their parapet in a most reckless way, and, as we looked, this phenomenon became more and more pronounced.

'A complete Boche figure suddenly appeared on the parapet, and looked about itself. This complaint became infectious. It didn't take "Our Bert" ... long to be up on the skyline. This was the signal for more Boche anatomy to be disclosed, and this was replied to by our men, until in less time than it takes to tell, half a dozen or so of each of the belligerents were outside their trenches and were advancing towards each other in No Man's Land. I clambered up and over our parapet, and moved out across the field to look. Clad in a muddy suit of khaki and wearing a sheepskin coat and Balaclava helmet, I joined the throng about half-way across to the German trenches.'

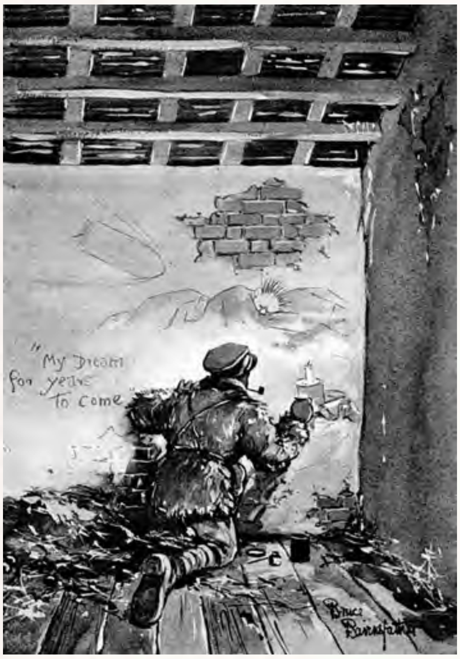
It was whilst serving in the Ypres Salient that Bairnsfather soon began to use his skill as a cartoonist to depict life at the front, many of his drawings featuring the walrus-moustached character 'Old Bill'. These cartoons were soon published as the series that came to be known as 'Fragments from France'; they became an immediate success.



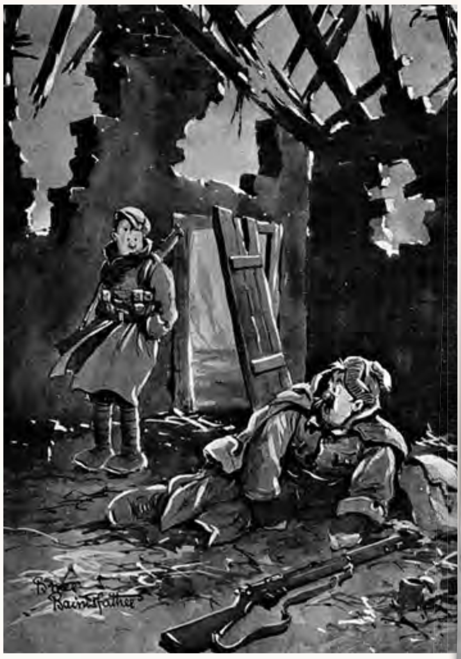
Bullets & Billets

By Bruce Bairnsfather

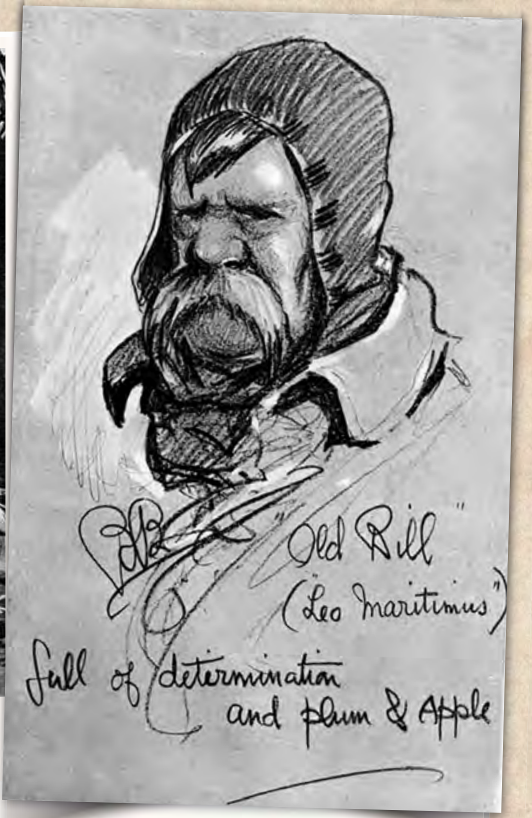
London: Grant Richards Ltd.
St Martin's Street


"My Dream for years to come"
Bruce Bairnsfather

ABOVE: 'The Birth of Fragments – Scribbles on the Farmhouse Walls'; this cartoon by Bairnsfather depicts how his work first began.



ABOVE: 'Shut that blinkin' door; There's a 'ell of a draught in 'ere,' is the caption Bairnsfather gave to this cartoon.


"Old Bill"
(Leo maritimus)
Full of determination and plum & Apple

ABOVE: A typical depiction of 'Old Bill'. The original caption states: 'First Discovered in the Alluvial Deposits of Southern Flanders. Feeds Almost Exclusively on Jam and Water Biscuits. Hobby: Filling Sandbags, on Dark and Rainy Nights.'

Appearing in the weekly magazine *The Bystander* from March 1915, these cartoons inspired merchandise from playing cards to handkerchiefs as well as plays and films. A first compilation volume of his drawings, *Fragments from France*, was published in January 1916. It went on to sell more than a million copies.

On 1 December 1916, the publisher Grant Richards released *Bullets and Billets*, Bairnsfather's first autobiographical effort. In his Foreword, Bairnsfather wrote: 'Down South, in the Valley of the Somme, far from the spots recorded in this book, I began to write this story. In billets it was. I strolled across the old farmyard and into the wood beyond. Sitting by a gurgling little stream, I began, with the aid of a notebook and a pencil, to record the joys and sorrows of my first six months in France. I do not claim any unique quality for these experiences. Many thousands have had the same. I have merely, by request, made a record of my times out there, in the way that they appeared to me.'

Understandably, towards the end of *Bullets and Billets* Bairnsfather graphically describes the moment when he was wounded in April 1915 during the Second Battle of Ypres. He was on his way to visit one of his unit's positions when it happened:

'I heard the enormous ponderous, gurgling, rotating sound of large shells coming. I looked to my left. Four columns of black smoke and earth shot up a hundred feet into the air, not eighty yards away. Then four mighty reverberating explosions that rent the air. A row of four "Jack Johnsons" had landed not a hundred yards away, right amongst the lines of men, lying out firing in extended order. I went on, and had nearly reached the farm when another four came over and landed fifty yards further up the field towards us.

ABOVE: Second Lieutenant Bruce Bairnsfather pictured near the front line in the Ypres Salient during the winter of 1914/15.

'"They'll have our guns and section," I thought rapidly, and hurried on to find out what had become of my sergeant. The shelling of the farm continued; I ran past it between two explosions and raced along the old gulley we had first come up. Shells have a way of missing a building, and getting something else near by. As I was on the sloping bank of the gully I heard a colossal rushing swish in the air, and then didn't hear the resultant crash ...

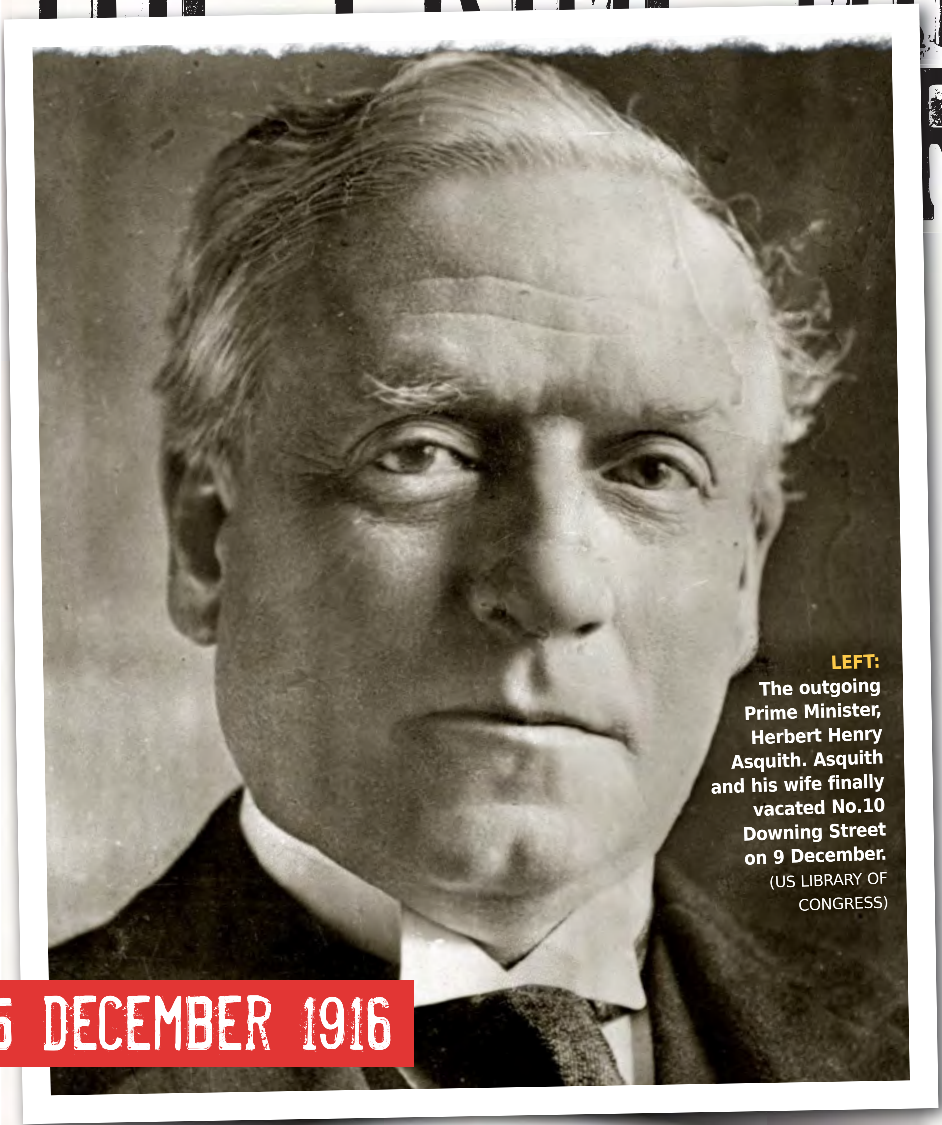
'All seemed dull and foggy; a sort of silence, worse than all the shelling, surrounded me. I lay in a filthy stagnant ditch covered with mud and slime from head to foot. I suddenly started to tremble all over. I couldn't grasp where I was. I lay and trembled ... I had been blown up by a shell.

'I lay there some little time, I imagine, with a most peculiar sensation. All fear of shells and explosions had left me. I still heard them dropping about and exploding, but I listened to them and watched them as calmly as one would watch an apple fall off a tree. I couldn't make myself out. Was I all right or all wrong? I tried to get up, and then I knew. The spell was broken. I shook all over, and had to lie still, with tears pouring down my face. I could see my part in this battle was over ...

'How I ever got back I don't know. I remember dragging myself into a cottage, in the garden of which lay a row of dead men. I remember some one giving me a glass of water there, and seeing a terribly mutilated body on the floor being attended to. And, finally, I remember being helped down the Wieltj road by a man into a field dressing station. Here I was labelled and sent immediately down to a hospital about four miles away ... In three days I was back in England at a London hospital – "A fragment from France".'

Such was the reputation that Bairnsfather had already gained, the first edition of 50,000 copies of *Bullets and Billets* sold out within a week. As reprint after reprint followed for the remainder of the war, it is perhaps not surprising that General Sir Ian Hamilton once described Bairnsfather as 'The Man Who Won the War'. ●

THE PRIME MINISTER RESIGNS



LEFT: **The outgoing Prime Minister, Herbert Henry Asquith. Asquith and his wife finally vacated No.10 Downing Street on 9 December.** (US LIBRARY OF CONGRESS)

5 DECEMBER 1916

HERBERT HENRY Asquith, later 1st Earl of Oxford and Asquith, was a political survivor. Until Margaret Thatcher's third term in office, H.H. Asquith was the longest serving Prime Minister of the twentieth century. A skilled lawyer, he became Chancellor of the Exchequer under Campbell-Bannerman after the Liberals won the 1906 General Election. When Campbell-Bannerman resigned due to ill-health in April 1908, Asquith succeeded him as Prime Minister. He was still in power when Germany invaded Belgium in August 1914 and he led the UK into war.

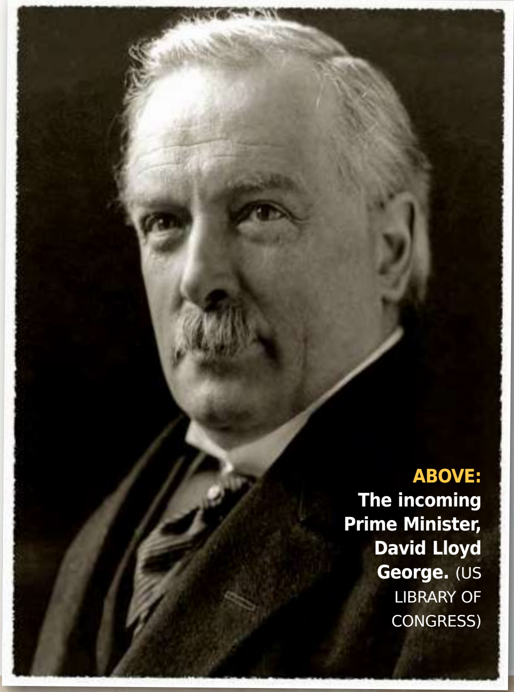
Few things went well for Asquith or his government in the early stages of the war, but it was in 1915 that pressure was brought to bear upon Asquith and his Cabinet. The first real crisis that Asquith had to face in 1915 was the 'Shell Scandal'. This arose because of the dependence upon artillery after the opposing forces had dug in along the Western Front. The expectation had been for a war of movement and manoeuvre in which artillery would play a supporting role to the infantry and cavalry. The comparatively static conditions that developed after the Battle of the Marne meant that artillery could be placed in position and fired almost continually at the enemy, providing it had sufficient shells. Munitions factories were unable to keep up with demand from the front line and the failure of the British Expeditionary Force to follow up its initial success in breaking through the German lines at the Battle of Aubers Ridge on 9 May 1915 was put down as being due to a shortage of shells.

Asquith's government was savagely criticised in the Press but it was Lord Kitchener, the Secretary of State for War, who was seen as being responsible and Asquith survived. The next storm to beak around Asquith's Government was the failure of the Dardanelles and Gallipoli operations. Realising that his administration was in serious trouble, Asquith offered the Conservatives a share in government by inviting them to form a coalition. This time it was the First Lord of the Admiralty, Winston Churchill, who took the fall and he was removed from office.

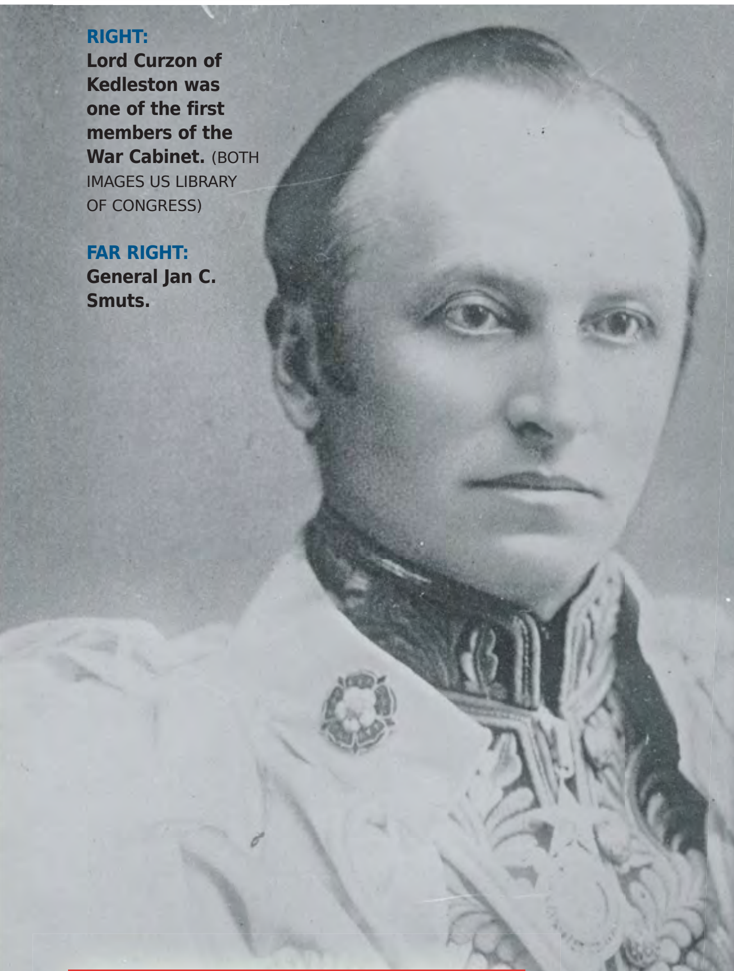
A War Committee was formed in 1916 to direct war policy which included the more energetic David Lloyd George, the then incumbent Secretary of State for War. Lloyd George insisted in becoming the chairman of the War Committee, to which Asquith agreed. A newspaper article suggested that Asquith was being sidelined and called for Lloyd George to become Prime Minister. At this Asquith said that he was going to take back chairmanship of the War Committee. Lloyd George then resigned as did Arthur Balfour the First Lord of the Admiralty.

Facing this rebellion, Asquith received King George's permission to demand his ministers' resignations and reconstruct his government, believing that this would bring everyone into line under his authority – but he misjudged the situation. In turn he was forced to tender his own resignation on the afternoon of 5 December 1916. His motives are unclear but he may have believed that nobody else would be able to form a government.

The following day, 6 December 1916, the Leader of the Conservatives, Bonar Law, Lloyd George, Arthur Balfour; and the Leader of the Labour Party, met at Buckingham Palace. In the resultant discussions it was made clear to Asquith that he could no longer expect the support of either the leading Conservatives or Liberals. After being in power for more than eight years, H.H. Asquith stepped aside and Lloyd George became Prime Minster, a post he held until 1922. ●



ABOVE: **The incoming Prime Minister, David Lloyd George.** (US LIBRARY OF CONGRESS)



RIGHT: **Lord Curzon of Kedleston was one of the first members of the War Cabinet.** (BOTH IMAGES US LIBRARY OF CONGRESS)

FAR RIGHT: **General Jan C. Smuts.**

9 DECEMBER 1916

WAR CABINET FORMED

THOUGH SOON the attrition on the Somme would tell on the German Army, as 1916 drew to a close there was much criticism of the Coalition government's handling of the war. Though a coalition in wartime was an obvious measure to ensure political unity, it also meant that leading individuals from both sides of the House of Commons wanted to have their say. The result was, as is so often the case in such circumstances, endless discussions and compromise which caused delay and prevented rapid response to the ever-changing nature and direction of the war. As a result, it was proposed that the direction of the war should be delegated by the Cabinet to a three-man committee. This was to be headed by the then Secretary of State for War, David Lloyd George, though Prime Minister Herbert Asquith retained the right to chair the committee if he wished.

As we have read, Asquith clashed with his ministers, leading to his eventual resignation, but the principle of having a small body of individuals to decide on key matters of war policy was retained by Lloyd George, and was termed the War Cabinet. The initial War Cabinet was composed of the Lord President of the Council, Lord Curzon of Kedleston, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Andrew Bonar Law, the Leader of the Labour Party, Arthur Henderson, and Sir Alfred Milner, the Cabinet being chaired by Lloyd George himself. The inclusion of Alfred Milner was hugely significant. Although not holding a ministerial post, Milner had been appointed High Commissioner for South Africa and Governor of Cape Colony during the Boer War. He was therefore the only person with any experience of running a country during wartime.

The War Cabinet was retained for the management of the war effort throughout the rest of the conflict, though its composition (and name) changed over the months. Whilst Lloyd George, Curzon and Bonar Law remained in the War Cabinet throughout its existence, others were added. In May 1917 the former Labour Leader and Minister of Pensions joined the War Cabinet and in June that year its numbers were increased with the inclusion of Jan Smuts, who, of course also had experience to bring from the Boer War.

Smuts' inclusion indicated the growing importance of the Commonwealth to Britain's war effort around the globe and this was further emphasized by the expansion of the War Cabinet in 1918 with the addition of Austen Chamberlain, Secretary of State for India. Eventually, a new body, entitled the Imperial War Cabinet, took over the direction of the war. Chaired by Lloyd George, it was composed of the Prime Ministers of South Africa, Australia, New Zealand and Canada and, again, the Secretary of State for India as well as other senior ministers from Britain and the Dominions.

Whilst the original principle of a small committee had clearly been abandoned, the Great War had become a world war and the views of the many peoples of the Empire could not be ignored. The Imperial War Cabinet sat until October 1919. ●

RFC EXPANSION

12 DECEMBER 1916

SPEAKING IN the House of Lords on *24 May 1916, during a debate on the Air Service, Lord Grimthorpe said that the* ‘rate of expansion in the Air Service since the outbreak of war has been extremely rapid. The Royal Flying Corps has ten times the strength that it had at the beginning of the war, and the Royal Naval Air Service has thirty or more times the strength it had.’

The growth of the RFC indeed continued throughout 1916, as Peter Dye points out in *The Bridge to Airpower*: ‘The total number of officers and other ranks [rose] from just over 16,000 in January to almost 55,000 in December.’ However, Dye noted, ‘although the force deployed on the Western Front grew rapidly, it actually represented a declining share of the RFC’s overall manpower, falling from 44 percent of total strength, to just 32 percent by the end of 1916’. This was a reflection of the increasing investment in the training system.

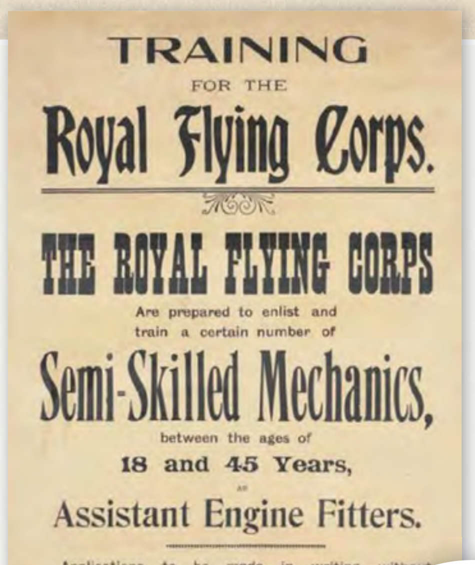
‘By the end of the year,’ Dye continues, ‘the Western Front still represented approximately half of the RFC’s operational effort (in terms of service squadrons available) but the support “tail” had grown substantially … The increase in the number of RFC aircraft on the Western Front was [also] rapid, rising from a little under 230 in January 1916 to more than nine hundred by the end of the year. Given the problems faced by the British aircraft and aero-engine industry, this was an impressive achievement.’

These figures were, Dye reveals, not the full story: ‘The actual number of machines available for operational flying was much lower than the headline total would indicate. For example, of the 229 aircraft held on charge by the RFC on the Western Front as of 1 January 1916, only 191 were with the frontline squadrons. Over the course of 1916 the proportion of “inactive” aircraft grew from approximately 16 percent to over 30 percent.’ The reasons for the decline in availability were numerous and varied; the need to maintain a larger reserve due to increased wastage, more aircraft awaiting repair and higher levels of wear and tear as a consequence of more intensive air operations.

Despite such a backdrop, the demands placed on the RFC and RNAS throughout 1916 were relentless, owing partly to the result of the Somme Offensive. On 16 November, for example, General Sir Douglas Haig, commander of the British Expeditionary Force, formally requested that twenty additional air squadrons be deployed to France by the spring of 1917.

An initial RFC expansion plan for 1916, to take the front line strength to thirty-two squadrons (each with between eighteen and twenty pilots) by September, was almost achieved with thirty-one squadrons deployed. This growth had taken place against a backdrop of higher attrition rates. The figures for the second quarter of 1916 provide a good illustration of this with the figure for total aircraft wastage being 198 – 134 through accidents, thirty-three through attrition and thirty-one through enemy action.

Despite such figures, there were bigger challenges ahead. On 12 December 1916, the Army Council approved the expansion of the Royal Flying Corps to no less than 106 front line squadrons! ●



TRAINING

FOR THE

Royal Flying Corps.

THE ROYAL FLYING CORPS

Are prepared to enlist and train a certain number of

Semi-Skilled Mechanics,

between the ages of

18 and 45 Years,

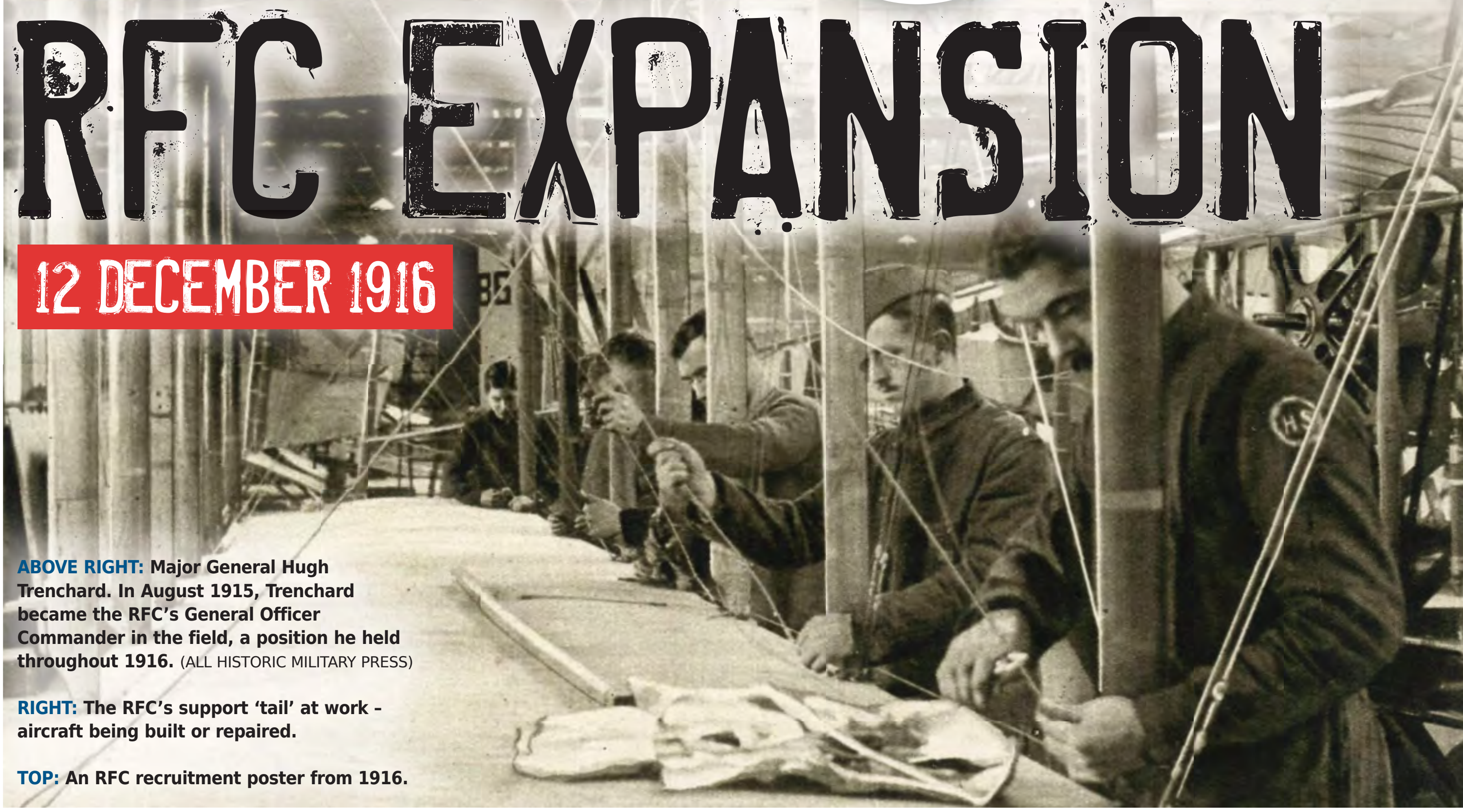
as

Assistant Engine Fitters.

Applications to be made in writing withou delay to

Lieut. F. S. CRESWELL, R.F.C.,

Albert Street Police Y



ABOVE RIGHT: **Major General Hugh Trenchard. In August 1915, Trenchard became the RFC’s General Officer Commander in the field, a position he held throughout 1916.** (ALL HISTORIC MILITARY PRESS)

RIGHT: **The RFC’s support ‘tail’ at work – aircraft being built or repaired.**

TOP: **An RFC recruitment poster from 1916.**

ABOVE: The Reichstag pictured in session at about the time of the debates surrounding the German peace proposal of December 1916. (US LIBRARY OF CONGRESS)

GERMANY'S PEACE PROPOSAL

12 DECEMBER 1916

THE FOUR months of fighting on the Somme had cost the British and French armies around 650,000 men killed or wounded, but the German Army had suffered on a similar scale, losing upwards of half a million soldiers. With enormous casualties also being incurred at Verdun, the German authorities began to realise that the war they had begun was one that they could not win.

Consequently, on 12 December 1916, at a specially summoned meeting at the Reichstag, the Chancellor delivered a speech outlining Germany's willingness to open peace negotiations.

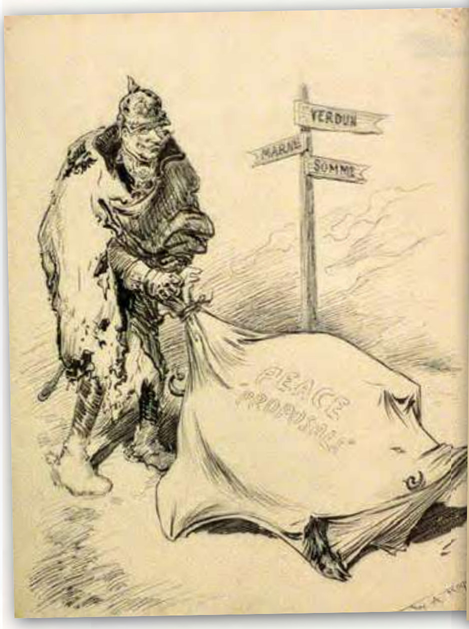
Such was the animosity felt by the French towards the Germans who had invaded their country and killed hundreds of thousands of their young men, there was little prospect of the French agreeing to any terms other than a complete surrender. This meant that it was to the British that the Germans hoped their appeal would have the best prospect of success, suggesting negotiations could be made through neutral governments:

'The most formidable war known to history has been ravaging for two and a half years a great part of the world. The catastrophe that the bonds of a common civilisation more than a thousand years old could not stop, strikes mankind in its most precious patrimony; it threatens to bury under its ruin the moral and physical progress on which Europe prided itself at the dawn of the twentieth century. In that strife Germany and her Allies, Austria-Hungary and Turkey, have given proof of their indestructible strength in winning considerable success at war. Their unshakable lines resist ceaseless attacks of their enemies' arms ...

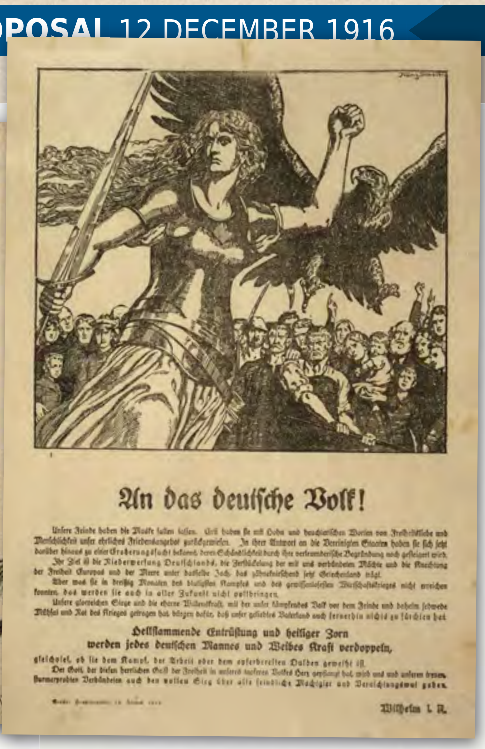
'The latest events have demonstrated that a continuation of the War cannot break their resisting power. The general situation much rather justified their hope of fresh success ... They do not seek to crush or annihilate their adversaries. Conscious of their military and economic strength and ready to carry on to the end if they must the struggle that is forced upon them, but animated at the same time by the desire to stem the flow of blood and to bring the horrors of war to an end, the four Allied [Central] Powers propose to enter even now into peace negotiations. They feel sure that the propositions which they would bring forward and which would aim to assure the existence, honour, and free development of their peoples would be such as to serve as a basis for the restoration of a lasting peace.'

The German suggestion met with almost universal disapproval from all quarters of the British press, public and politicians. It was made clear that the original peace proposals put forward by the UK in August 1914 were still the same and only ones that would be entertained in 1916. Germany and her allies still occupied vast tracks of French and Belgian territory, let alone Serbia, Montenegro and parts of Russia and Rumania, with which, no doubt, they hoped to bargain, but Britain could never consider negotiating away the land of its allies. Such a consideration was, according to *The Times* of 16 December, 'morally impossible'. As the recently-installed Prime Minister, David Lloyd George, asked: 'Who then, with the exception of Germany, could derive any advantage under such conditions by the opening of peace negotiations?'

It was suggested in the British press that the German offer was not a genuine move to end the fighting, but was done to create a peace movement in the UK following the fall of Asquith's government just a few days earlier, or merely with the aim of an armistice which would give the Germans a chance to build up their armaments, furnishing her 'with the opportunity to lay fresh plans of aggression.' ▷▷



ABOVE: A cartoon published in the Allied press deriding the German peace proposal – note the sign in the background indicating Verdun, Marne and the Somme. (US LIBRARY OF CONGRESS)



An das deutſche Volk!

Hellflammende Entrüſtung und heiliger Zorn
werden jedes deutſchen Mannes und Weibes Kraft verdoppeln,

Wilhelm I. R.

ABOVE: A German poster from January 1917 quoting a speech made by Kaiser Wilhelm II against the Allied rejection of the *Friedensangebot* (peace proposal).

Furthermore, the German offer indicated the weakness of the Germans, and rather than encouraging a peace movement, it achieved exactly the opposite, for it encouraged all parties to believe that Germany was on the verge of collapse and that the Allies would soon be victorious. 'They see in it,' continued *The Times*, 'an official admission that the German masses are tired of the war.'

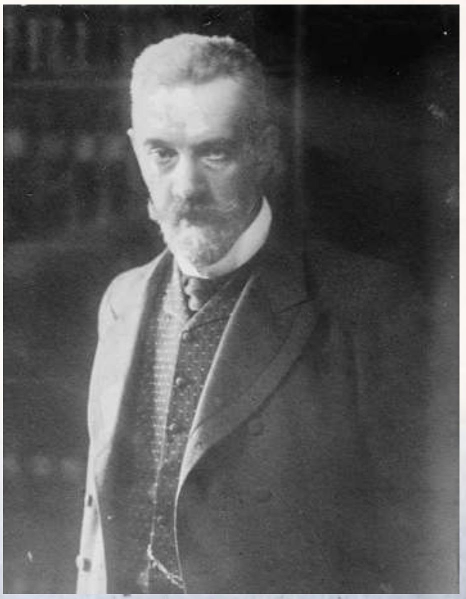
Lloyd George, saw that the Germans had three reasons for issuing the note: 1) To reconcile that part of the German population who were beginning to feel that 'brilliant victories' without number brought nothing but more privations and mounting casualties; 2) To persuade neutral countries which were becoming increasingly hostile to Germany that the continuation of the war was due to the bloodthirsty stubbornness and ambition of the Allies; and 3) To enter into peace negotiations whilst the military conditions were still favourable to the Germans.

Lloyd George's Cabinet discussed the matter fully and the view of Britain's allies was sought. As might be expected, the French were 'definitely suspicious' of German intentions, and the Russian Durma announced that they would make peace 'only after victory'. The Russian Foreign Minister saw quite clearly that the true motive of the Germans was, 'To attempt at the last moment to profit by their fleeting territorial conquests before their domestic weakness was revealed'.

There was a strong suggestion from Washington that the Allies should at least see what the Germans were prepared to offer. Likewise, the Swiss and the Dutch felt that the Allies would be advised not to reject any proposals out of hand.

All these considerations apart, what ruled a peace deal entirely out of the question was the wording of the German note's penultimate paragraph: 'If, notwithstanding this offer of peace and conciliation the struggle should continue, the four Allied [Central] Powers are resolved to carry it on to an end, while solemnly disclaiming any responsibility before mankind and history.' One of the principal features of the Treaty of Versailles at the end of the war was that Germans bore responsibility for the start of the conflict and therefore had to make reparations. Never would France, Britain or Belgium agree that German could be absolved from starting the war.

Therefore, on 30 December a reply was sent to the Germans, rejecting any offer of a negotiated peace. 'We are determined never to sheath the sword until the military domination of Prussia is wholly and finally destroyed.' ●



ABOVE: Dr. Theobald von Bethmann Hollweg, Imperial Chancellor of Germany at the time of the peace proposal. (US LIBRARY OF CONGRESS)

ABOVE: By the end of 1916, German losses in men and equipment were becoming critical. Here prisoners of war are under escort whilst carrying a captured machine-gun on the Western Front. (HISTORIC MILITARY PRESS)

NEW MINISTRIES FORMED

22 DECEMBER 1916

ABOVE: **A scene more reminiscent of the Second World War – a trans-Atlantic convoy forms up in 1916 prior to setting out for British ports.** (US LIBRARY OF CONGRESS)

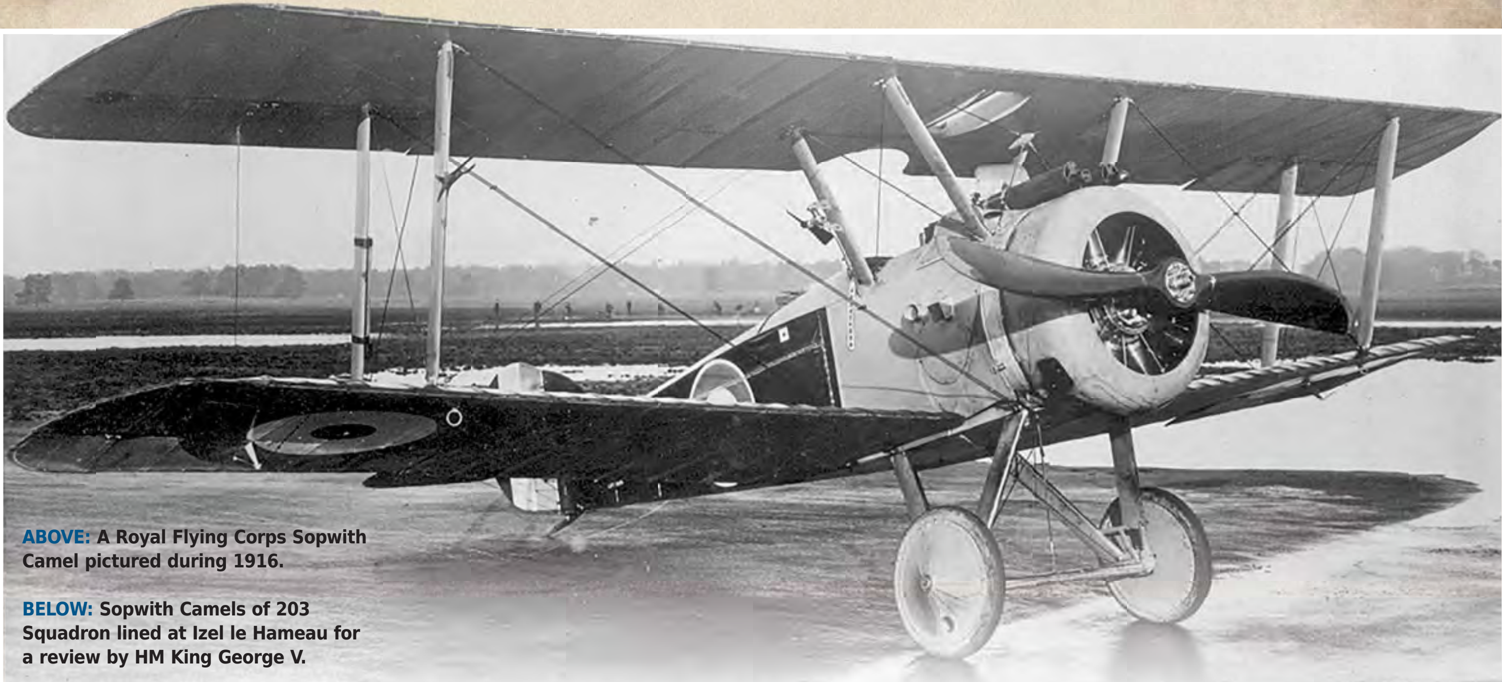
THE SCALE of the war effort that had enveloped Britain by the end of 1916 led to a number of changes within the government and administration throughout the year. On 22 December 1916, for example, a number of new ministries were formed under the auspices of the New Ministries and Secretaries Act 1916.

The first of these was the Ministry of Food. As the war had progressed, the cost of food had soared. A pint of milk cost a penny in the early 1900s; by the Armistice people were expected to pay sixpence a pint. Basic foodstuffs such as flour, fresh fruit, vegetables and meat were getting harder to obtain. Under a Food Controller, the new Ministry was empowered to regulate food supply and consumption, and take steps to encourage food production.

The first Food Controller was Lord Devonport. The powers entrusted to him in his new role were so wide-reaching that concern was raised in Parliament. In a debate on 18 December, for example, John Dillon MP stated: 'He is a man who will in the immediate future have enormous powers which, if they are misused, will rapidly increase the peace party in this country. It will be within the power of the Minister of Food, if he acts imprudently or harshly or in an irritating fashion, to create an amount of public disturbance probably unnecessarily, and also an amount of public discontent which would be extremely injurious to the successful conduct of the War, and might lead to very unfortunate consequences. Therefore we are bound to examine very closely what are the powers of the whole system of the Ministry of Food.'

Similar pressures that led to the introduction of the Ministry of Food also saw the creation of a new Ministry of Shipping on 22 December 1916. The poor harvest in 1916 and the increased losses to the Merchant Navy, amongst other problems, led to calls for centralized control of Britain's shipping. On setting up the new Ministry, Lloyd George informed Parliament that shipping was to be 'nationalised in the true meaning of the word'. In reality, and in time, it became clear that this meant little more than the extension of requisitioning at the normal rates for the duration of the war.

Another new Ministry that came into being on 22 December 1916, was the Ministry of Pensions. The introduction of conscription earlier in the year had led to growing unease about the involvement of charities in validating claims for war pensions. The losses of the first day of the Battle of the Somme greatly escalated these concerns. At long last there was recognition that a state system of administration was required to deal with the scale of these casualties – recognition that led directly to the formation of the Ministry of Pensions. One of the immediate impacts of the new organisation was the fact that disbursements such as the separation allowance, disability pensions and widows' pensions became fully under the control of the government, eliminating the involvement of the voluntary sector to top up inadequate payments. ●



ABOVE: A Royal Flying Corps Sopwith Camel pictured during 1916.

BELOW: Sopwith Camels of 203 Squadron lined at Izel le Hameau for a review by HM King George V.

22 DECEMBER 1916

THE SOPWITH CAMEL'S MAIDEN FLIGHT

BY THE late summer of 1916 the increasing tempo of the air war over the Western Front had created an obvious and vital need for British aircraft manufacturers to design and build an aircraft specifically for the fighter role. At the time, three major fighter designs were already taking shape in Great Britain: the Royal Aircraft Factory's SE5 and F2b, and, at Sopwith, the F1, an aircraft soon to achieve lasting fame as the 'Camel'.

Intended as a two-gun replacement for the single-gun armed Sopwith Pup, the Camel prototype, powered by a 110 hp Clerget engine, first flew on 22 December 1916. Designed by a team led by Thomas Sopwith, the single-seat Camel was initially called the 'Big Pup'. The origin of the name 'Camel' is stated in many accounts to be 'because the breeches of the guns were enclosed in a prominent hump-like fairing'.

In both appearance and design, the Camel was not revolutionary. The fuselage, like that on most of the Camel's contemporaries, was a wooden, box-like structure, covered with aluminum at the front, by plywood around the cockpit, and then a fabric-covered back to the tail. With its centre of gravity relatively far forward – the engine, fuel tank, guns, and pilot were all in the front third of the aircraft – the Camel was 'tricky' to fly for the slow or unwary. In the hands of a skilled pilot, however, its handling characteristics 'were a gift'. While 413 Camel pilots were shot down in combat, 385 were lost in non-combat related accidents, the majority due to the Camel's difficult handling.

Two main variants of the Camel were produced; the F1 and the 2F1. The former, equipped with twin Vickers guns synchronised to fire through the propeller, was the main production version. The 2F1 naval variant, known as the 'Ship's Camel', had a slightly reduced wingspan and a removable tail to make the aircraft easier to store.

The Camel saw extensive service in home defence, over the Western Front, in the UK on training and test work until 1923, and in other countries up until 1928 - a remarkably long career for the period. The shipboard 2F1 also saw some success operating against German airships and seaplanes over the North Sea. Production totalled some 5,500 aircraft.

Perhaps the most famous example of this most famous design was Sopwith Camel B6313. Flown by Major William George Barker VC DSO & Bar, B6313 became the most successful fighter aircraft in the history of the RAF, shooting down forty-six aircraft and balloons from September 1917 to September 1918. Sadly, B6313 was dismantled in October 1918. Barker, intent on having a memento of this aircraft, 'liberated' the clock. But bureaucracy was close on his heels and he was asked to return it the following day!

The Camel was the first British fighter to mount twin forward-firing machine guns side-by-side, a natural arrangement that soon became standard for the RAF. Alongside the SE5a, the Camel helped the Allies address the balance of the air war over the Western Front and was credited with shooting down 1,294 enemy aircraft – more than any other fighter, of any nation, between 1914 and 1918. ●

ABOVE: King George V and Queen Mary during an official visit to the Canbury Park Road aeroplane factory of Kingston Aviation. (US LIBRARY OF CONGRESS)

THE ROYAL Family, just as it was to be in the Second World War, was an inspiration to the nation. Fully appreciating that the people of Britain and across the Empire were fighting for King and Country, George V knew that he had to bolster his subjects' morale. This manifested itself in many ways, including in 1917, changing his family name from the House of Saxe-Coburg and Gotha to that of the House of Windsor. In doing so, he and his family members relinquished all their German titles. He made several visits to the Western Front, factories and dockyards, and Queen Mary, when not accompanying her husband, often visited wounded serviceman in hospital.

In April 1915, the King made a major sacrifice, to show his determination to suffer the same privations as some of his people. This followed Lloyd George's appointment to the position of Minister of Munitions. One of the energetic Welshman's first concerns was with productivity in the munitions factories. He believed that full employment and high wages were giving workers unusual amounts of disposable income which in turn led to increased consumption of alcohol amongst the working classes.

Listening to Lloyd George's concerns, the King made the following offer: 'His Majesty feels that nothing but the most vigorous measures will successfully cope with the grave situation now existing in our Armament factories ... If it be deemed advisable, the King will be prepared to set an example by giving up all alcohol liquor himself and issuing orders against its consumption in the Royal Household, so that no difference shall be made, so far as His Majesty is concerned, between the treatment of the rich and the poor in this question.'

As a consequence, from 6 April 1915, the Royal Family refrained from alcohol for the rest of the war. 'I hate doing it,' the King wrote in his diary, 'but I hope it will do good.'

The King also sought to give all the encouragement in particular to the armed forces, which included a speech in the House on 22 December 1916: 'Throughout the months that have elapsed since I last addressed you My Navy and Army, in conjunction with those of our gallant and faithful Allies, have, by their unceasing vigilance and indomitable valour, justified the high trust I placed in them. I am confident that, however long the struggle, their efforts, supported by the inflexible determination of all My subjects throughout the Empire, will finally achieve the victorious consummation of those aims for which I entered into war. My Government has been reconstructed with the sole object of furthering those aims unaltered and unimpaired ... I thank you for the unstinted liberality with which you continue to provide for the burdens of the War.'

The King concluded his speech with the following message: 'The vigorous prosecution of the War must be our single endeavour until we have vindicated the rights so ruthlessly violated by our enemies and established the security of Europe on a sure foundation.' ●

ABOVE: King George V inspecting troops during a visit to the Western Front. (COURTESY OF DAVE CASSAN)

22 DECEMBER 1916

KING GEORGE'S SPEECH

THE END OF THE THIRD YEAR OF THE WAR

THE THIRD year of the war ended with the prospect of victory in the air, tinged though, both with the sadness of the lives lost in the past, brutal months, and the acceptance that victory would be bought only with more blood and sacrifice. The past twelve months had seen loss of life on an unprecedented scale. The Battle of Verdun, which had raged from February until December, had cost both France and Germany around half a million men. In Britain families and communities still mourned the young soldiers killed or wounded on the Somme. Casualties amongst the British and the Germans had been even greater on the Somme than at Verdun. The results of the two battles were not just Allied victories, for victory on the Western Front was only ever marginal – the true consequence of these battles was that Germany had suffered the loss of a million of its best young warriors. It could not sustain such losses for much longer and had sought peace, but not on terms the Allies could ever accept.

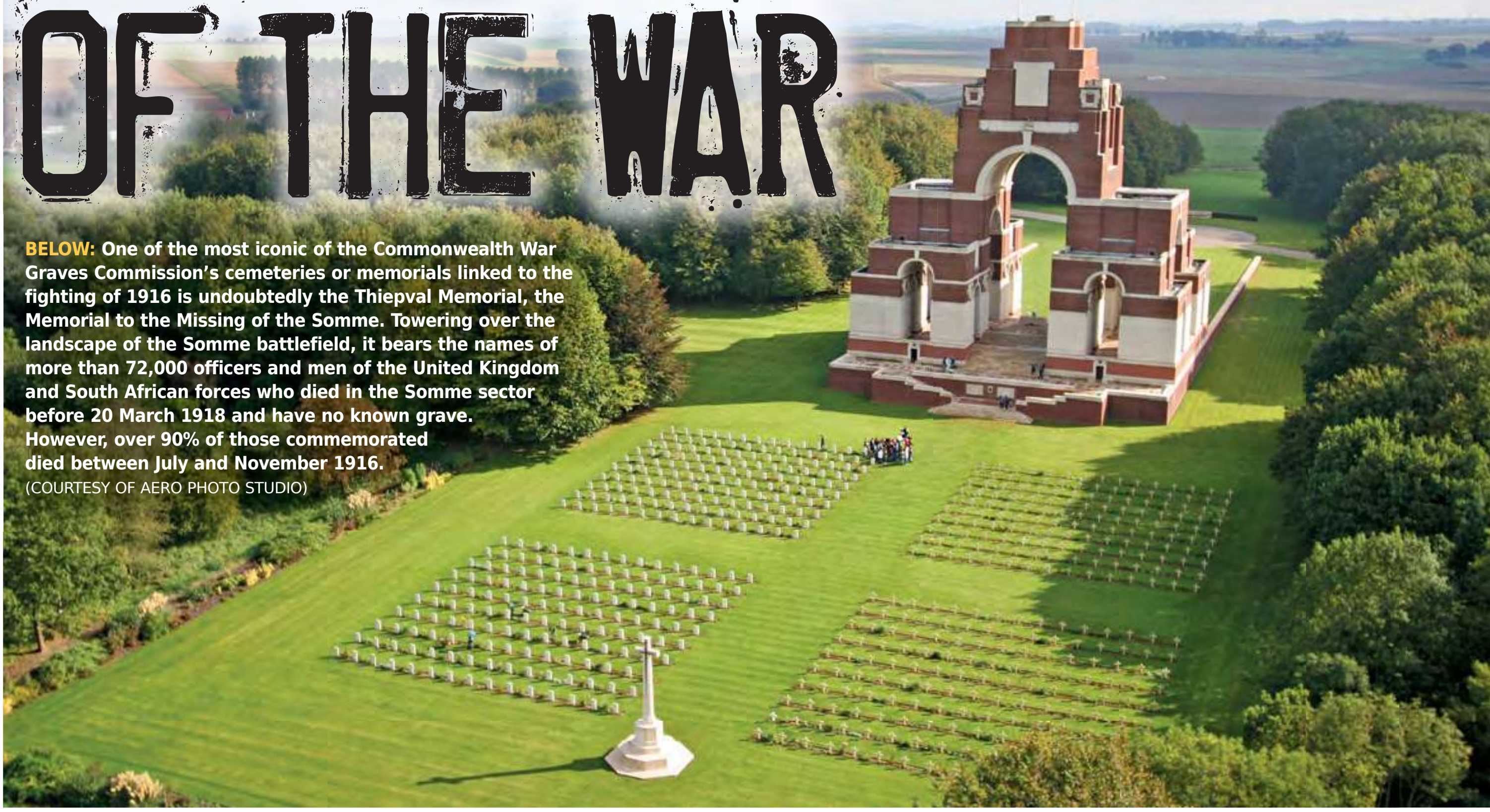
1916 IN NUMBERS

Number of personnel in the Army by 31 December 1916	3,451,861
BEF Casualties in France and Flanders	
Killed	152,131
Wounded	450,917
Missing and Prisoners of War	40,228
Total	643,276
Royal Navy Casualties (killed, wounded, missing and PoW)	12,050
British Army Expenditure	£587,796,567
Number of enemy troops captured	41,308
Air raid casualties in the UK (according to official statistics)	
Killed	18
Wounded	61
Number of horses in the Army	789,135
Number of rifles manufactured in UK	1,168,899
Number of machine-guns manufactured in the UK	33,200
Number of filled shells manufactured	52,943,513

The year to come would see the collapse of the Triple Entente and the loss of one weak ally for another infinitely stronger one as Russia was overwhelmed by revolution and the United States was overcome with anger at Germany's brutality and duplicity.

The threat from the much-feared Zeppelins that it was foretold would reign death from the skies upon the United Kingdom was all-but eliminated, only for their places to be taken by the long-range Gotha and Giant bombers. The 'Sussex Pledge' was renounced and Germany resumed unrestricted submarine warfare.

On the Western Front a combined Anglo-French offensive on the Aisne which was supposed to achieve *the* decisive breakthrough was abandoned as a failure, and in Flanders the British Army slid and slipped through the mud at Passchendaele as another 400,000 men were killed or wounded on both sides. The more the war changed it seemed, the more it stayed the same. ●



BELOW: One of the most iconic of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission's cemeteries or memorials linked to the fighting of 1916 is undoubtedly the Thiepval Memorial, the Memorial to the Missing of the Somme. Towering over the landscape of the Somme battlefield, it bears the names of more than 72,000 officers and men of the United Kingdom and South African forces who died in the Somme sector before 20 March 1918 and have no known grave. However, over 90% of those commemorated died between July and November 1916.
(COURTESY OF AERO PHOTO STUDIO)

£3.99 INC FREE P&P*

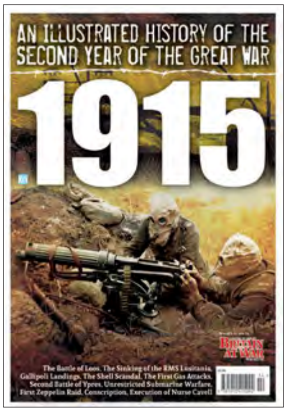
REDUCED
AN ILLUSTRATED HISTORY OF THE FIRST YEAR OF THE GREAT WAR
1914

1914

Europe had stumbled into the most deadly & destructive conflict in its history. No-one knew how it would be fought; no-one knew how it would end.

132 PAGES

£5.99 INC FREE P&P*

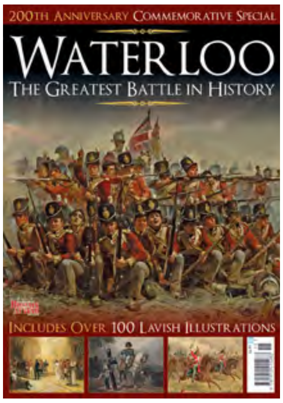

AN ILLUSTRATED HISTORY OF THE SECOND YEAR OF THE GREAT WAR
1915

1915

The second of our illustrated histories of the First World War examines the all-encompassing nature of second year of the conflict.

132 PAGES

£6.99 INC FREE P&P*


200th Anniversary Commemorative Special
WATERLOO
The Greatest Battle in History
Includes Over 100 Lavish Illustrations

WATERLOO

The Allied nations agreed to combine against Napoleon and in June 1815 they began to mass on France's frontiers.

100 PAGES

£5.99 INC FREE P&P*

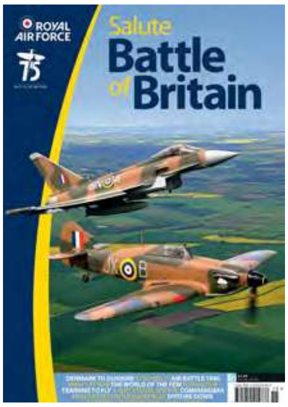
BATTLE FOR BRITAIN SPECIAL EDITION
LUFTWAFFE Eagles

LUFTWAFFE EAGLES

Battle for Britain special edition - featuring all of the major combat types including colour schemes, markings & unit heraldry.

100 PAGES

£5.99 INC FREE P&P*


ROYAL AIR FORCE
75
Salute Battle of Britain

BATTLE OF BRITAIN SALUTE

Commemorating the RAF's role in one of history's greatest air battles.

100 PAGES

£3.99 INC FREE P&P*

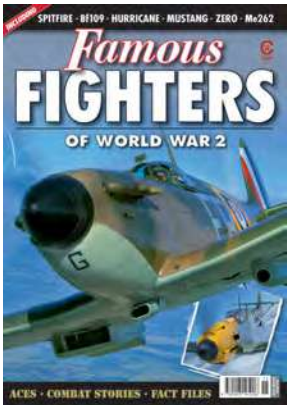
REDUCED
100TH ANNIVERSARY TRIBUTE
Famous FIGHTERS OF WORLD WAR 1
INSIDE!
AIRCRAFT • ACES • COMBAT STORIES • FACT FILES

FAMOUS FIGHTERS

100th anniversary tribute to the top fighters of World War 1.

100 PAGES

£5.99 INC FREE P&P*


SPITFIRE • Bf109 • HURRICANE • MUSTANG • ZERO • Me262
Famous FIGHTERS OF WORLD WAR 2
ACES • COMBAT STORIES • FACT FILES

FAMOUS FIGHTERS WW2

The top 10 fighter aircraft of the Second World War.

100 PAGES

£6.99 INC FREE P&P*

A DAY-BY-DAY ACCOUNT OF OPERATION MARKET GARDEN
ARNHEM
AIRBORNE ASSAULT 1944

ARNHEM

A day-by-day account of Operation Market Garden year of the Great War.

132 PAGES

AVIATION SPECIALS

ESSENTIAL reading from the teams behind your **FAVOURITE** magazines

HOW TO **ORDER**

VISIT
www.keypublishing.com/shop

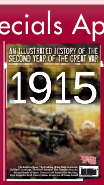
OR

PHONE
UK: 01780 480404
ROW: (+44)1780 480404

*Prices correct at time of going to press. Subscriber discount valid on full price items only. Free 2nd class P&P on all UK & BFPO orders. Overseas charges apply. Postage charges vary depending on total order value.

NEW FREE Aviation Specials App

COLD WAR WARRIORS



Simply download to purchase digital versions of your favourite aviation specials in one handy place! Once you have the app, you will be able to download new, out of print or archive specials for less than the cover price!

IN APP ISSUES £3.99

1069/15

THE WESTERN FRONT ASSOCIATION

founded 1980

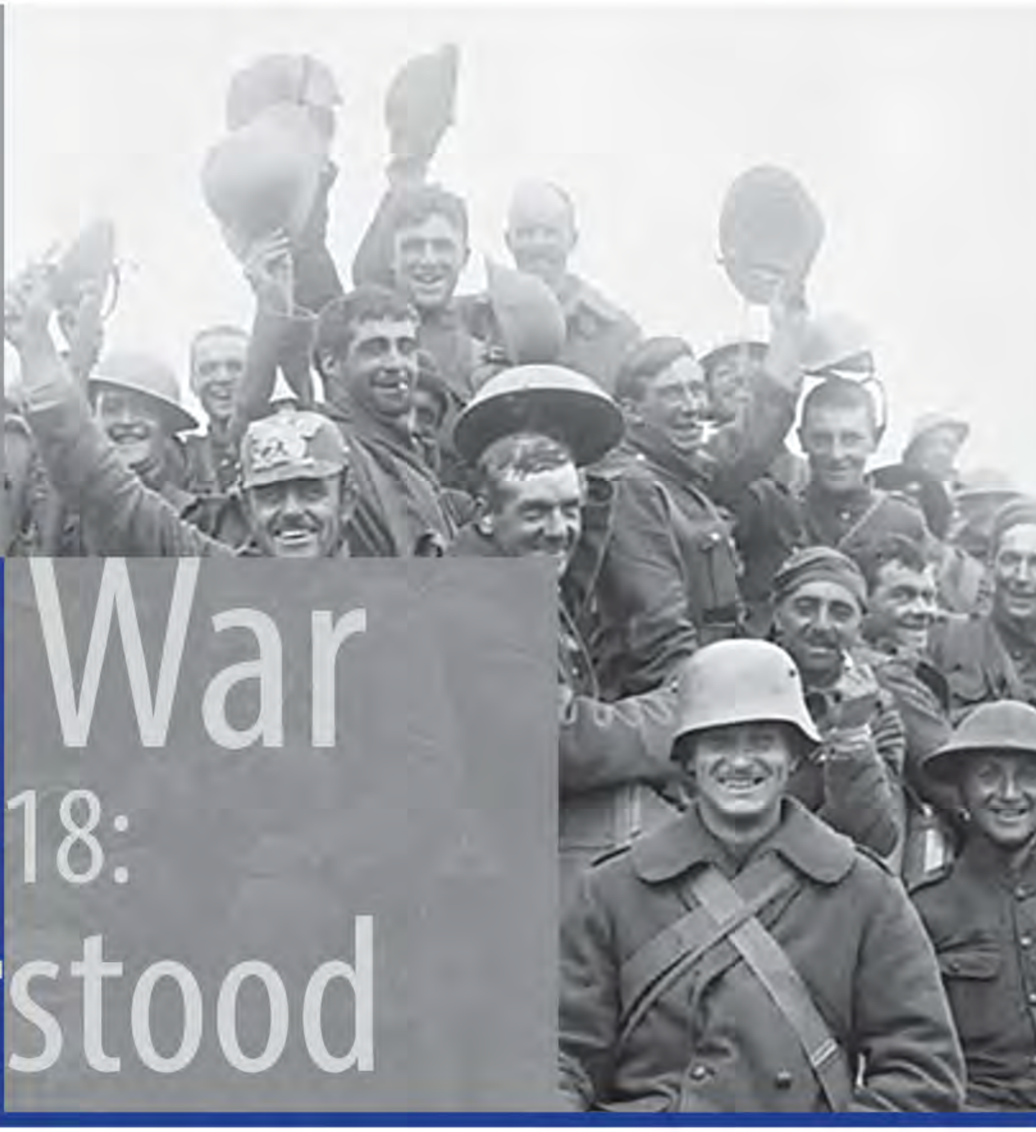


Photo: Department of National Defence. Library and Archives Canada, PA-000809

the Great War 1914-18: understood

In 1916, the scale and nature of the Great War changed. The war of attrition began with Verdun. Kitchener's New Armies arrived in France, the BEF taking more of the line on the Western Front, down to the Somme. Citizens learned to be soldiers, to drive tanks, dig underground mines and face a new, common enemy. Mud.

The Great War is a fascinating subject, with a complex blend of military, social, science, political and economic history. To understand more about the changes that came about in 1916, when new technologies such as the tank began to change the face of battle, **join us at The Western Front Association**.

The Western Front Association
understanding the Great War 1914-18: explore | learn | share
www.westernfrontassociation.com
The Western Front Association is a registered charity no 298365